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THE STORY OF HAMLET

BY

SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

THE STORY OF 'HAMLET'

HAMLET, a noble and valiant King of Denmark, had come to his death suddenly and in a strange fashion, having been bitten (as it was given out) by a snake whilst slumbering in his orchard-garden at Elsinore. Indeed the body bore the marks of some venomous poison, and the story might have continued to pass for true, had not certain other things happened.

To begin with, and scarcely a month later, his wife, the Queen Gertrude—to whom he had been devotedly attached—married his brother Claudius, who thus became King in his room; a union not only repellent in itself and indecent in its haste, but past understanding by those who had known and loved the dead hero and, out of their memories, compared him with his successor. For this Claudius was a base and sensual man, unwarlike, mean in his person, and in no true sense royal, albeit a crafty schemer when not in his cups. But upon no one did the Queen's infatuation inflict such a blow as upon her son, Prince Hamlet. For this young Prince had idolised his father whose name he bore, and striven to copy his virtues in hope to grow up such another man; insomuch that although he could never have attained to this—being by natural bent a scholar rather than a soldier, and meditative rather than inclined to action—he had already attained to be a youth on whom all the eyes and the best hopes of Denmark fixed themselves; for he was brave as well as graceful, and the dreaminess of his disposition did not hinder his excellence in all manly exercises, which he still loved to practise with his father for model.

The news that this adored father was dead came to him at Wittenberg, where he was studying, and he hastened home for the funeral. Judge then how, following close upon the shock of his grief, the discovery of his mother's inconstancy fell upon the mind of this young Prince. He found it monstrous, incredible: it unhinged all his trust in mankind; and forsaking sport and even books, he fell into a melancholy, and practised in speech and manner a savage disdainfulness. In part this was a raw philosophy such as young men turn to when life for the first time goes wrong with them, and they find their faith in it deceived: but it was also something more serious. Hamlet, suspicious of everything and everybody now, scarcely knew what to

suspect touching his father's death. Only there hung over him, like a dark and uncertain cloud, the sense that some hideous wrong had been committed, and that the duty of righting it belonged to him as his father's son.

Though the Court had cast off its mourning, Hamlet still kept to his suit of black, and wore it even on the day of his mother's marriage. She and her new lord could not but feel reproached by this obstinate sorrow. They many times exhorted him to be of better cheer, telling him that death was but the common lot of mankind, assuring him of their affection, and reminding him of the honourable place he held at Court as the next heir to the throne. To all this the Prince would answer politely enough, veiling his scorn: but no sooner was he alone than his indignation would break forth. 'His mother—how could she have behaved so? She that had seemed to match her late husband in love—and he had loved her tenderly as though he would have screened even the winds of heaven from blowing too roughly on her dear face. She that had walked behind his hearse so tearfully! And yet, before those shoes were old, to have mated with such a man as this Claudius! Why, a brute beast would have mourned longer.' Silent Hamlet must be: but such doings were wicked, and could not come to good.

Just now it began to be whispered that certain soldiers, keeping sentry by night on the ramparts of the castle, had seen to their terror an apparition of the dead King, clad in complete mail, pacing upon a platform that overlooked the seashore. For three nights successively this figure had walked, appearing soon after midnight or upon the stroke of one, and remaining until the cock crew, when it shrank away and vanished.

Word of this was brought to Hamlet by one Horatio, a fellow-student at Wittenberg and his bosom friend, who had come to Elsinore to visit him, playing truant from the university. Immediately on arriving, Horatio had heard the rumour of this ghost, and on the third night had kept watch with the soldiers upon the platform, where he had indeed seen it. 'My lord,' he reported, 'the apparition was the King, your father. I knew him; and these hands are not more like.' 'For the love of God, tell me more,' entreated Hamlet. 'Did you not speak to it?' 'I did, but it made no answer. Yet once methought it lifted its head as if to speak; but at that moment the cock crew, and it vanished.' Horatio described the vision closely. It wore full armour, with the vizor and beaver of the helmet raised so that both face and beard were visible—the beard a grizzled black, the countenance very pale, and sorrowful rather than wrathful. 'It was the King, your father, my lord, and no other.' Marcellus and Bernardo, two soldiers

of the guard, confirmed this. 'Do you keep the watch to-night?' Hamlet asked them. 'We do, my lord.' 'Then will I watch with you. If it appears again, and in my father's likeness, all the power of hell shall not forbid me to speak to it.' For now in truth Hamlet suspected foul play, and that his father's ghost walked the earth for vengeance on it.

Before midnight, then, Hamlet, with Horatio and Marcellus, took post upon the dark platform. The night air was keen and nipping, and they spoke of this in murmurs, and of the noise within the castle where King Claudius was holding drunken wassail—till of a sudden Horatio caught Hamlet by the arm. 'Look, my lord, it comes!'

At first sight of the apparition advancing along the platform Hamlet crossed himself and gasped out a prayer to the powers of heaven to defend him. But it drew nearer; and with that, recognising the death-like features, he cast away fear, and calling aloud to it, 'King! Father! Royal Dane!' entreated it to speak, and tell why it thus broke from sepulchre to haunt the moonlight and shake the souls of men—What it sought? What help, perchance, it needed? The ghost made no answer in words, but beckoned Hamlet apart from his companions; and so it passed on. 'I'll follow it,' swore the Prince. 'Do not,' they besought him: for they feared the spectre might be some thing of evil sent from hell to tempt him towards the giddy verge of the ramparts, and there, depriving him of reason, drive him to cast himself down into the sea far below. 'Nay, it waves to me still—I must follow!' answered Hamlet, who nowadays valued his life but little. 'And, for my soul, what can this spirit do to it, both being immortal?' His companions would have restrained him by force. 'Unhand me, gentlemen—or, by heaven, I'll make a ghost of him who hinders me!' He broke from their grasp, and ran in pursuit along the ramparts.

The apparition, having thus drawn Hamlet to a lonely place apart, fronted him and spoke in the awful tones of the dead. 'I am thy father's spirit, Hamlet. O listen, if ever thou didst love thy father!'

'O God!' broke in Hamlet, to whom his father had ever been dearer than life.

'Revenge, then, his foul and unnatural murder.'

'Murder!'

'All murder is foul; but this of mine was most foul and unnatural. For—hear me, Hamlet—thou knowest how the tale goes throughout Denmark that, as I lay asleep in my orchard, a serpent stung me. . . . That serpent was he who now wears my crown.'

'My uncle? Ah, my soul prophesied this!'

'Ay, that beast who had stolen and seduced the will of my Queen,

seemingly so virtuous. O Hamlet! that she could so decline from me, whose love for her was of that dignity that it went ever hand in hand with the vows I made to her on our marriage day! . . . But let me be brief, for already I scent the morning air. As I slumbered in the orchard, as my custom was of an afternoon, upon my unguarded leisure thy uncle came stealing with a phial of deadly henbane, which he let drop into my ear—a poison that courses through the body swiftly as quicksilver, curding the blood and breaking out through the flesh in blotches, leprous and loathsome. Thus was I, asleep, by a brother's hand robbed at one blow of life, crown, queen; cut off without sacrament and sent to my account unpardoned of those sins which have now to be purged in torment. O Hamlet, it is horrible!—let not thy noble nature suffer it to go unpunished. Yet contrive nothing against thy mother; think no evil thoughts of her; leave *her* punishment to heaven. Farewell and remember!' So saying—as the glow-worms on the terrace paled their fires in the first light of morning—the ghost vanished.

'Remember!' Small likelihood was there of Hamlet's ever forgetting. From this moment his father's story and command were bitten on the tablets of his mind to the wiping-out of all lesser trivial records. . . . He heard Horatio and Marcellus calling: they were seeking him along the ramparts: and he halloaed back his whereabouts. They, when they came, found him hysterically mirthful. He would impart to them nothing of what the ghost had said, but fobbed them off with a jest. Only he made them take oath upon his sword to reveal nothing they had seen that night. As they laid their hands to the hilt, to swear, they heard beneath their feet the hollow far-withdrawn voice of the ghost commanding the oath. But still Prince Hamlet mocked at the voice, with unhinged laughter.

From this night forward Hamlet's manner at Court, in dress, speech, and behaviour, became yet stranger and less accountable. The King and Queen doubted he must be mad. Yet this madness (they argued) could hardly spring from grief at his father's death; it must have some deeper, or at least some more subtle, cause, which they set themselves to discover. In the King's mind, too, restless and guilty, there lurked a suspicion that Hamlet knew, or guessed, more than he should, and might be assuming this mask to cover some design against him. In sum, Hamlet's conduct—whether of intent or no—made them uneasy: and first they sent for two youthful gentlemen, by name Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who had been his playmates in boyhood, but had been strangers to the Court for some while; and to them proposed that they should affect to renew their friendliness with the Lord Hamlet, draw him out, and so learn if they could, and report, the

secret of his rough humour. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, both supple men and of no very scrupulous conscience, agreed to misuse their old access to the Prince's regard. But this attempt utterly miscarried; for, though not mad by any means, Hamlet's mind, if only by imitation, was quick as a madman's at suspicion. He suspected every one, save only his friend Horatio; and, therefore, these two false friends had scarcely presented themselves with their professions of affection before they were met with the question, 'In the beaten way of friendship, what business brings you to Elsinore?' 'To visit you, my lord.' 'I thank you; but is this a visit of your own free inclination? Come, come, were you not sent for?' Their faces betrayed their confusion. 'I know,' said Hamlet, 'the good King and Queen sent for you. I have of late lost all my mirth, forgone all bodily exercises, fallen into a jaundice with all created things. This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air—this brave overhanging firmament—this majestical roof fretted with golden stars—why, it appears no other thing to me than a pestilent creation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!—yet, to me, a quintessence of dust delighting me not. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore: give me your hands. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived—I am but mad in one quarter, north-north-west; when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a heron, as true friendship from false.'

The Lord Chamberlain, Polonius, the King's first counsellor, was—in his own opinion at any rate—more successful in divining the cause of the Prince's malady. This old courtier was at once unwise and overwise, wordy in speech, given to covering with trite maxims a mind that sought all its ends with a foolish and indirect cunning. He had two children, and both (as one may say) better than he deserved: a gallant son, Laertes, now abroad in Paris at the French court, and a fair and gentle daughter, Ophelia. With this maiden the Prince Hamlet, before his trouble fell on him, had been in love—even deeply in love. He had written letters, sent rings to her; had by many tokens declared an affection to which she—poor soul—had happily listened and confidingly, as indeed his passion had been sincere. Sincere it yet was; or would be, had not this burden been laid on him, crushing out youth and, with youth, all happy future of love. It mastered him; yet now and again his instinct, being young, would revolt from the burden and swing back in passion and pity to Ophelia. In his darker moods, now grown almost to a habit, he would visit and frighten her with his

distraught face, unkempt attire, and almost demented behaviour—he who aforetime had been the mirror by which the young gentlemen of the Court had ordered their dress and fashions of good breeding; and again in these moments of revolt, he would show himself almost wildly loving; in such sort that she, being wholly without clue to his distemper, could only guess (she was little more than a child) that his love for her was the cause of it. In one of these fits he wrote her an extravagant letter—which yet was cunningly contrived if it meant, by showing her a mind off its balance, to prepare her for anything, even for decline of his fidelity. It ran to verse—

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.'

Whatever Ophelia doubted, her father, having extorted this letter from her and perused it, made no doubt at all, but hastened off to show it to the King and Queen, and announced that herein lay the secret of Lord Hamlet's complaint. ''Tis the very sickness of love. I myself suffered something like it in my time, and recognise the symptoms.' Their Majesties agreed that it was likely enough; but how to prove it? Polonius had a plan ready. He would contrive that his daughter should meet the Prince as though by accident in a gallery where the King and he could conceal themselves and overhear the conversation. Ophelia lent herself to this trick, not very willingly.

Hamlet, summoned upon some trivial invented message, came moodily along the gallery, lost in thought, debating with himself the question that now most haunted him—Had he strength of will to carry through the work of revenge? Were it not simpler to take his own life and so by a little stroke of the dagger be free of all this coil. Ah! but that, too, required strength of will—not to die; if death ended all, that were easy enough; but to face a possible 'something after death,' the undiscovered country beyond the grave. . . . While he thus meditated, raising his eyes he saw Ophelia coming towards him. She was reading in a book; a missal, as he supposed, or a book of hours. 'Lady,' said he, 'in thy prayers let all my sins be remembered.' 'My lord,' said Ophelia, after wishing him health, 'I have tokens of yours, given to me when the sweet words that accompanied them made each gift fragrant. Their perfume being lost now, I pray you receive them back.' 'Ha! are you honest?' exclaimed Hamlet, striding close to her—his suspicions aroused, either by something in her face or because his quick ear caught a sound from the King's hiding-place—'Are you fair?' Catching her by the wrists, he broke into a wild invective

upon women and marriage, and so flung her from him, storming—'Get thee to a nunnery!—to a nunnery, begone! . . . Where's your father?' 'At home, my lord,' answered Ophelia, but falsely. 'Shut the doors on him, then, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house. . . . Wouldst marry? I tell thee, all women are false. I'll have no more of it—it hath made me mad. I say we will have no more marriages; those that are married already, all but one'—here he sank his voice—'shall live; the rest shall keep single. To a nunnery, I say!' He rushed off, leaving Ophelia to lament the overthrow of this noble mind, the workings of its reason—once so excellent—now no better than sweet bells jangled. 'Woe is me that I should see this!—I who listened to his music vows and sucked their honey—I that am now among ladies the most deject and wretched!' For indeed she believed him mad, little foreseeing that she and real madness were to make closer acquaintance.

But the King had overheard enough to satisfy him that love was not the secret of Hamlet's distemper. 'His mind broods on something,' he told Polonius, 'and that something is dangerous;' and he plotted to send his nephew out of the kingdom to England, on the pretext to collect some tribute that was owed to him there.

While the King laid one plot, Hamlet was laying another. He had as yet but the ghost's word for his uncle's guilt, no positive proof; and it might well be that ghost was some figment sent by the devil to tempt him. Before being driven to do murder, a crime which his soul abhorred, he wanted evidence—evidence in the light of day and at least enough to satisfy his own mind that to kill King Claudius was a sacred duty; and just now chance or fate put in his way a device for getting this evidence.

A company of players—old favourites of his—visited Elsinore to perform before the Court. Hamlet welcomed them, and, for a distraction, remembering how one of the players had used to delight him with a certain speech, put in the mouth of Æneas and describing the death of Priam, King of Troy, with the lamentation of Queen Hecuba, he desired to hear it again. The actor, after some trouble in recalling the words (for the play had not been popular, and was by this time almost out of mind) complied, and threw so much passion into the old lines that Hamlet fell a-musing. 'Here is a fellow who, rehearsing a mere fiction, can make his voice break with sorrow, his eyes shed tears, and infuse his very soul into the action; and all for—what? For Queen Hecuba, forsooth! What is Hecuba to him, that he should shed tears about her? What, I wonder, would he do if he had *my* motive, *my* cue for passion? Why, he would drown the stage with tears. . . . Ah, but wait a moment! I have heard that criminals, before now,

seated and witnessing a crime enacted on the stage, have been so affected by its likeness to their own that they have started up then and there and confessed their misdeeds. Why can I not lay such a trap for the King's conscience? I 'll have these players act something like my father's murder before him, and I 'll watch his face. If it blench, my course is plain; I shall know that the ghost was no devil's trickery, but my father's very spirit, and that its tale was true.'

He chose his play accordingly. It was called *The Murder of Gonzago*, and told of a crime committed upon a noble Viennese duke by one Lucianus his kinsman, and how the murderer afterwards won the love of the duke's wife, Baptista. Hamlet got the players to insert a few lines of his own, to give it more point. King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, and the whole Court attended the performance; Hamlet seating himself on a stool by the Lady Ophelia's feet, but paying her small courtesy, for his eyes were watching the King. The play began with a dialogue between Gonzago and his wife, the one sick and foreboding that his remaining days would be few in this world, where she, honoured and beloved, would soon find another husband, perchance one as kind as he; the lady protesting that—

> 'Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
> In second husband let me be accurst!
> None wed the second but who kill'd the first.'

'Wormwood, wormwood!' muttered Hamlet, observing the King start and change colour. The scene ended with Gonzago laying himself down to sleep, while his wife closed his eyes with a kiss before stealing away.

'Madam, how like you this play?' Hamlet could not forbear putting this question to his mother.

'The lady protests too much, methinks,' answered Queen Gertrude, but nervously.

'Have you heard the plot of this play?' the King asked, also in some anxiety. 'There is naught to offend in it, I trust?'

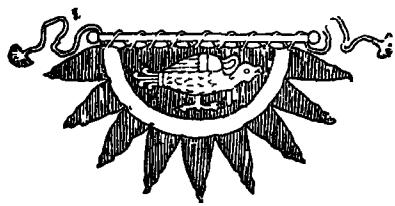
'Indeed, no,' Hamlet assured him: 'they do but jest, poison in jest. *The Mouse-trap* is the name of the play; 'tis a knavish piece of work—but what of that? Your Majesty and we that have clear consciences need not wince at it.'

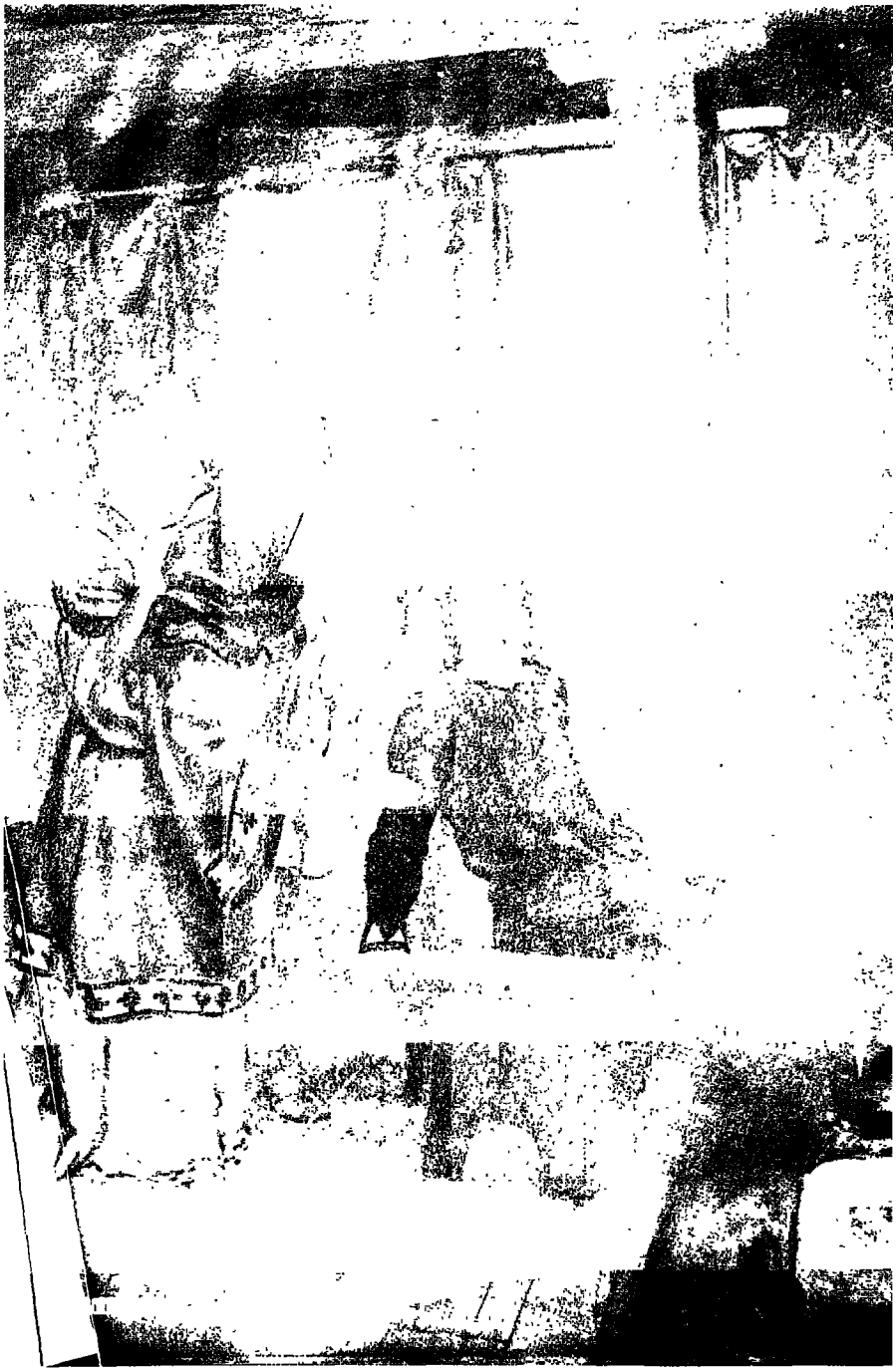
The play proceeded. But when the murderer Lucianus crept upon the stage to drop poison in the sleeping man's ear, the conscience-stricken Claudius could endure it no longer. His hands clutched the arms of his throne. 'Look! look!' cried Hamlet, savagely exulting. 'He poisons him in the garden for his estate—the story is extant and written in choice Italian. You shall see presently how the murderer

Act I. Scene II.

QUEEN. *Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,*
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

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gets the love of Gonzago's wife.' But the King had staggered up, calling for light. 'Lights! lights!' cried the courtiers, dispersing as he broke from the company and took refuge in his chamber. The curtain fell between the unfinished drama and the audience-hall, in which none but Hamlet and Horatio were left lingering. Hamlet laughed aloud and wildly. 'Didst note him?' he asked his friend. 'I'll take the ghost's word, after this, for a thousand pounds!'

He was convinced now. But before he could control his excited brain to plan some action upon this certainty, messengers came to him, urgent and one upon another, with word that the Queen his mother desired to speak with him in private. He dismissed them curtly enough, with word that he would attend on her by and by; and they, returning with his answer, on their way reported it to the King, who had prompted the message. Old Polonius was one; and he, after making report, promised to hie off and hide himself behind the arras in the Queen's chamber, and listen secretly to the talk between mother and son. Such eavesdropping seemed prudence merely to this overwise and crooked old counsellor. With the other messengers—the double-faced pair, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—the King had already concocted his plan, imperative now, for conveying Hamlet to England, where he would be out of the way of doing harm. Yet—so curious a thing is conscience—they had scarce left him with their scheming instructions before Claudius flung himself on his knees and in a real agony of conscience sought pardon of God for the dreadful crime which had just now been brought home to him. Vain prayer! for while he enjoyed the profit of his crime—the kingly dignity it had procured for him, his union with the dead man's widow—his soul like a limed bird might struggle, but might never disengage itself from the snare, and mount to heaven for forgiveness. He knelt, striving to pray; but only the words went up—they could not lift and carry his heart with them.

While he knelt, Hamlet, pausing on his way to the Queen's chamber, parted the hangings softly, and looked in upon him, drawn sword in hand. 'Now I can kill him, pat,' was the Prince's first thought. 'But no; he is praying! He sent my father to purgatory without benefit of sacrament; and shall I, taking him in a moment of repentance, send this murderer perchance to heaven?' He dropped the curtain as softly as he had raised it, and passed on to visit his mother.

Queen Gertrude sat awaiting him. 'Hamlet,' she began, 'you have much offended your father.' To hear his uncle and stepfather thus called stung him at once, and he retorted: 'Mother, you have much offended *my* father.' 'That is an idle answer.' 'To a wicked ques-

tion, madam.' 'How now, sir! have you forgotten to whom you are speaking?' the Queen demanded indignantly. 'No, by the rood. You are your husband's brother's wife, and—to my sorrow—you are my mother.' 'Nay, then,' returned the Queen, 'if you take this way with me, I 'll set those to you that can speak.' But her son caught her by the wrists and forced her down upon the chair. 'Sit! you shall not budge until I have held a mirror up, and forced you to see your inmost soul.' 'What wilt thou do!' she cried, fearing his madness. —'Thou wilt not murder me! Help!'

'Help! help!' echoed a muffled voice behind the arras. Hamlet swung about, and believing that the King had followed him to play the eavesdropper—being now, too, in the hot fit for action—he whipped out his sword and drove it at the place whence the voice proceeded. 'What 's there! A rat?'

'O, I am slain!' cried the voice, and a body dropped heavily within.

The Queen wrung her hands. 'Hamlet! Hamlet! What hast thou done!' 'Nay, I know not,' answered Hamlet, quietly: 'is it the King?' 'A rash, a bloody deed!' 'Ay, mother, to kill a King is wicked—almost as wicked as to kill one, and marry with his brother.' 'What say you?—"kill a King"?' 'That was my word, lady,' said Hamlet, and lifted the arras. There at his feet lay—not the King, as he had expected—but old Polonius, never to prate or spy or meddle any more in this world. Hamlet gazed down on the corpse. . . . 'Thou poor, officious fool,' he addressed it, 'I took thee for thy better. Farewell! thou hast found at last the danger of being too busy.' He dropped the arras over the corpse, and turned again to his mother. 'Leave wringing thy hands, I say, and sit you down!' She obeyed him, protesting feebly; and then, as though these few moments had not been, he took up the interrupted tale, and launched into fierce and terrible denunciation of her sin—a sin so hideous (he told her) that heaven blushed and earth sickened at the thought of it. He pointed to two pictures—this of her first husband, that of her second —and leading her eyes from one to the other, forced them to dwell on the difference; this, of his father, how noble, godlike! that, of his uncle, how unwholesome even to the sight. 'Have you eyes?' he demanded. 'Where are your eyes?' Yes, she had eyes; and turning them back from the portraits upon herself he forced them to stare at her inward shame until she panted for mercy, crying out that they were piercing her very soul. Horrible words he used—and in the midst of them broke off suddenly, himself staring now. For, as if to remind him of its former warning that his mother's sin was not his business but Heaven's, the ghost of his father formed itself against the

dark hangings, visible to him only. The Queen, who saw nothing, verily believed him mad as he dropped on his knees and implored it to speak. Nor could she hear when the ghost spoke, bidding him step between her—his mother—and her fighting soul. 'On what gaze you, Hamlet?—to whom speak you?' she gasped. 'My father!' He pointed as the ghost vanished. She shook her head. 'Your overwrought brain has caused this vision, if vision you saw. I saw nothing. 'Mad, you call me? Nay, mother, solace your soul with no such, ointment: leave my madness and confess to heaven your own wickedness. Yes, and repent it.' 'O Hamlet!' she cried, 'you have cleft my heart in two!' 'Mother,' he implored, 'throw away, then, the worse half, and live the pure with what is left.' He must shortly sail for England (he reminded her); the King had contrived it, and now this slaying of Polonius made it most necessary for Hamlet to absent himself from Denmark, at all events for a while. 'While I am away, dear mother, be no more a wife to this man; so shall you be the better mother to me, and I will ask your blessing.'

King Claudius had now an open reason for sending Hamlet abroad with all speed. He had a mind, indeed, to make him suffer the extreme penalty for Polonius's death; but dared not, for the Danish people idolised their young Prince, and the Queen his mother, for all his reproaches, loved him as her life. There is, however, proverbially more than one way of killing a dog, and the King had hit on a plan for effecting abroad that which could not safely be done in Denmark. To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's companions on shipboard, he entrusted a sealed parchment to be delivered to his lieges in England, the purport of which was that they should put the Prince to death as soon as he landed. But Hamlet, albeit not mad, had (as we have seen) suspicions quick enough for a madman; and especially was he suspicious of this precious pair of fellow-travellers. Early on the voyage he groped his way to their cabin while they slept, and stole the commission away to his own room, where he laboriously made a copy of it, inserting their names in place of his own—sealed this copy with his father's royal signet, which happened to be in his purse—and creeping back, substituted it for the original. It chanced that, the very next day, their ship fell in with a pirate; and in the action that followed—the ships being grappled—Hamlet drew his sword and recklessly leapt aboard the attacking vessel. The cowardly crew behind him were less intent to follow than to seize an opportunity to cast off the grapplings. The ships fell apart; the Dane, catching the wind, sheered off; and Hamlet was left sole prisoner among the pirates, while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern held their way for England, congratulating themselves, little guessing what fatal instruc-

tions they bore in the substituted parchment. So they went to their fate.

The pirates, Hamlet's captors, were (in his own words) 'thieves of mercy.' They recognised their prisoner, and, knowing his rank, and hoping he would do a good turn for them at Court and intercede for them—for as pirates they were outlawed—they set him, as soon as might be, on shore with a couple of their crew, whom he despatched inland to the lodging of his friend Horatio with letters. That addressed to Horatio recounted what had happened, and covered another to the King briefly worded—

'SIR,—You shall know that I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow I shall beg leave to pay my respects to you, and, still with your permission, account for my sudden return.—HAMLET.'

Horatio, having forwarded this letter by a messenger to King Claudius, put himself under conduct of the sailors, and so met his dear friend the Prince wending back from the coast toward Elsinore, and turned with him.

As they neared the castle, their way lying through a graveyard, they saw a funeral train approaching, and drew aside among the tombs to watch. For behind the bier walked the King and Queen with their full Court; and the procession was further noteworthy, for that it came on its way in silence, with no choristers swinging incense or chanting a requiem as was customary at Christian burials; but a bellman only walked before the bier, and boys carrying garlands to show that it bore the corpse of a maiden. It was brought to the graveside and lowered, almost in silence, and thereupon the Queen herself led the last maiden-rites, strewing flowers and saying, 'Sweets to the sweet! Farewell! I had hoped to see thee my Hamlet's wife, and to have decked thy bride-bed, sweet maid, not to have strewed thy grave.' But already Hamlet had guessed the main of the sorrowful truth; for he had recognised Ophelia's brother Laertes and heard him plead with the priest that his sister might be buried with ample rites.

It was indeed the body of the fair and most unfortunate Ophelia; and her death had happened in this wise.—Grief of unrequited love, sorrow for her father's death, the horror to think he had been slain by the hand of one whose image could not be plucked from her heart—all these together crushing upon Ophelia drove her distraught, clean out of her mind. She wandered about the palace with lapfuls of pretty flowers which she would distribute to the courtiers, with pitiful little speeches and snatches of song—a sight to break the heart. And this was the sight that met Laertes as he arrived at Elsinore, having posted home from Paris upon news of his father's death. At first, knowing only that Polonius had perished by violence and within the

palace, he accused the King; and came to the gates demanding vengeance with a great crowd following—for few loved the usurper. But Claudius had no difficulty in convincing him of the truth, that Hamlet had done the deed (though he carefully forbore from telling how it had come to pass). Thereupon Laertes' wrath excusably turned upon the Prince; and much indeed might be forgiven to a son and brother who, having already this cause for vengeance, now beheld the wreck of his tenderly-loved sister. 'O rose of May!' he breathed, recoiling as she came through the doorway. She offered flowers, gently, yet looking on him with eyes that held no recognition. 'There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember; and there is pansies, that's for thoughts. . . . There's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end,—

'His beard as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll;
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan;
God ha' mercy on his soul!

—and on all Christian souls I pray God. God be wi' ye!'

But Claudius, seeing his opportunity, tempted Laertes' wrath to a vengeance inexcusable. He had just received, by messenger from Horatio, the letter announcing that Hamlet was set ashore on the coast and hastening back to the capital. His first plot having thus miscarried, he proposed another: which was, that on Hamlet's arrival Laertes (who was a notable fencer) should challenge him to a trial of skill, and that he should anoint his own foil with poison. To this wickedness Laertes, in his thirst for vengeance, consented; and in the end (as will be seen) it proved his own undoing.

But poor, innocent, demented Ophelia had wandered away while they plotted, and out into the fields and along the brookside, still seeking flowers. There grew by the brook a willow, leaning aslant the water that mirrored its grey foliage, and to this tree she came with garlands she had woven of buttercups, nettles, daisies and wild orchis, to hang them on the boughs. But as she clambered along the trunk and reached forward to suspend them, a branch broke and she and her garlands together fell into the pool below. Her clothes, spreading wide on the water, bore her up for a while; and there as she floated she still chanted snatches of old tunes, like one insensible of her peril, or as though she had been a naiad of the stream, until her drenched garments grew heavy and pulled her down from her wild melodious singing and drowned her in the ooze.

This, then, was Ophelia's funeral; and as Laertes looked into the

grave such a passion of regret seized on him that he leapt down and caught the poor body in his arms, straining his sister to him, and calling on the bystanders to pile earth upon them and bury them both together. But thereupon Hamlet, smitten with horror and remorse, sprang forward in a frenzy, and he too leapt into the grave, shouting, 'I am Hamlet, the Dane! Forty thousand brothers could not love Ophelia so dearly as did I!' Maddened by the sight of his father's slayer—who was prime agent too of his sister's untimely death —Laertes grappled with him and caught him by the throat, calling curses on him; and there they swayed and struggled until the attendants parted them, and Hamlet flung away to his lodging, leaving the mourners at the graveside.

In a cooler hour he confessed to Horatio that he was sorry to have so forgotten himself, and affronted Laertes' grief. 'Sure, by his parade of it he put me in a towering passion; yet I can understand his mourning, taught by my own.' And Hamlet promised to ask pardon of Laertes, and be reconciled if he might.

But this was not fated to be. For King Claudius had been striking while the iron of Laertes' anger was hot; and even while Hamlet was giving his promise there arrived one Osric, a fop of the Court, with word from his Majesty inviting to a trial of fence.

Now Laertes had won great commendation in Paris for his skill with the rapier: indeed reports of it had travelled home before him. Nevertheless (announced Osric) his Majesty had laid a heavy wager that the Prince Hamlet would hold his own with him and, in a dozen passes, would not come off worse by more than three hits. The Court was eager to witness the display.

'If it please his Majesty,' answered Hamlet, 'let the foils be brought, and I will win for him if I can; if not, I shall gain nothing but my discomfiture and the odd hits.' 'You will lose this wager, my lord,' said Horatio, when the courtier had left them. 'I do not think so,' Hamlet promised. 'Since he went to France I have been in constant practice with the foils. I shall win at the odds given: but,' he added, heavily, 'you can hardly think, dear friend, how ill I feel here, about the heart'—for something within him foreboded evil. ''Tis naught to trouble about, however.'

'Nevertheless,' Horatio pleaded, 'if your mind would dissuade you, obey it. I will go and say that you are not fit.'

'Nay, you shall not. There's a special providence even in the fall of a sparrow. What's to come will come, now or at another time: to be ready for it is the main point. Since no man takes aught of what he leaves in this world, what matter when he leaves? So let be, and fret not.'

Whilst they conversed, the King entered, with the Queen and their courtiers; and among these Laertes, eager for the contest. The foils were brought, and beside them the King had a table set, with cups of wine, that the fencers might drink if they grew thirsty in the heat of play. But, to make assurance the surer, Claudius had distilled a deadly poison into the cup intended for Hamlet.

Then standing beside the foils, whereof one was anointed with venom, and the wine-cup equally prepared for Hamlet's destruction, this most treacherous King took his nephew's hand, placed it in the hand of Laertes, and required them both to be friends.

'Give me your pardon, sir,' said Hamlet, readily enough, addressing his rival. 'I have done you wrong, but I entreat you to forgive it, as you are a gentleman. You have heard, I doubt not, how my poor mind has been afflicted and distraught; and I beg you and all this audience to know that whatsoever I have done to incur your resentment, whether natural or upon point of honour, has been done not by my true self, but by so much of me as has lain under this affliction. The rest I leave to your generous thoughts.' 'Sir,' answered Laertes, 'all reasons I have in nature to hate you are satisfied by what you have said. But, for my resentment upon any point of honour, I cannot be reconciled until older men, of known honour, assure me that I may be friends with you freely and without disparagement. Meantime, and with this condition, I accept and return your proffered friendship.'

'And that is well spoken,' returned Hamlet. 'We will play out this wager like brothers. Give us the foils.'

There was much exchange of courtesy in choosing the foils, but in the end Laertes had the poisoned one. They saluted and engaged: and at first Laertes, confident in his skill, did but play with his man, while King Claudius applauded every pass of his nephew's with exaggerated fervour. 'A hit!' claimed Hamlet. Laertes appealed. 'A hit, a very palpable hit,' decided Osric as judge. 'Well, let us to it again,' agreed Laertes. 'Stay,' interposed Claudius, eager and over-hasty; 'give me a cup to drink to Hamlet's success, and let him too refresh himself.' He offered the poisoned wine: but Hamlet set it by —he would not drink before playing another bout. In this bout again he claimed a hit, and Laertes acknowledged it. 'Our son is going to win!' cried the hypocritical Claudius, and with that he saw Queen Gertrude reach out a hand, and taking the cup, lift it to her lips to drink to Hamlet. 'Gertrude! do not drink!' he called, warning her, but too late: and he dropped back in his chair frozen with horror, as Hamlet, again thrusting the drink aside, called to Laertes to engage for the third bout, saying, 'Your best, I pray: for I fear that up to now you are fooling me.' And now Laertes, passing in earnest, gave

Hamlet a wound: and, both being incensed, some loose play followed; in which, disarming one another together, each made a snatch and picked up the other's rapier; the scuffle ending as Hamlet got home a deep thrust. 'Part them!' the King gasped, albeit nothing in this world mattered to him any more, for just on the moment, with a shriek, the Queen fell back dying into the arms of her attendants. Some one cried out that she swooned at the sight of blood, as Hamlet, still full of fight, and calling to his adversary to come on again, turned to reassure her: but she cried out that she was poisoned, and that cry was her last.

As he saw this, suspicion darted across Hamlet's mind. 'Shut the doors!' he commanded, 'there is some villainy, some treachery—shut the doors while we seek it out!' He turned again upon his adversary: but Laertes was sinking already, overcome by the venom from the exchanged foil.

'The treachery is here, Hamlet,' he panted. 'And thou—thou hast but a few moments to live! No medicine in the world can save thee—thine own hand grasps at this moment the venomed foil. In foul play I used it upon thee, and lie here, slain by it. But'—he pointed—'the King, the King is to blame!'

With that, Hamlet stared a moment at the weapon in his hand. 'The point venomed too?' he muttered; and so in a last access of passion he rushed upon the cowering Claudius and stabbed him again and again, driving the last of the venom home to the man who first, last, and most of all, deserved to perish by it.

His strength failed as the King fell dead. He had scarce time to exchange forgiveness with the dying Laertes before the pangs of the poison took hold on him too, and he fell back in the embrace of his constant friend Horatio. By the death of many—some deeply guilty, none wholly guiltless—the tangle of this tragedy had been cut, if not unravelled; the behest of his father's spirit obeyed. Yet at what cost the noble heart of this Prince, born to so high aspirations, could not help recalling and sighing for, as it cracked in Horatio's arms, and passed from this world that had so cruelly cheated it. 'O good friend, what a wounded name I leave behind, unless thou canst justify me by telling my story! Tell it, if ever thou held'st me close to thy heart; remember awhile, and in this harsh world absent thee from felicity awhile, drawing thy breath in pain, to tell it.' He roused himself to utter—now being King of Denmark—a last word on the succession to the throne. 'The rest was silence.'

The text of *Hamlet*, as we have it, is derived from two sources (1) a Quarto edition published in 1604, and (2) the version in the First

THE STORY

Folio of Shakespeare's collected works, which (as every one knows) was published in 1623. The 1604 edition is usually known as the Second Quarto, since in 1823 Sir Henry Bunbury discovered a very different text, also printed in Quarto, dated 1603. Worthless, or next to worthless for textual purposes—being pretty certainly a pirated version taken down during the performance of the play by some shorthand-writer in the pirate-publisher's pay, and hastily printed off—this First Quarto is of great interest to scholars and critics, for it considerably strengthens the conjecture that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was re-cast from an older *Hamlet* by another playwright, most likely Thomas Kyd, author of *The Spanish Tragedie.*

Certainly, and whether Shakespeare built on it or not, a play on this same theme was extant as early as 1589, for a passage in Green's *Menaphon* of that date clearly alludes to it. The story, or its main outlines, is found first in the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus, a writer of the twelfth century, and came to be known in England through a free French translation in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, first printed in 1571; but the dramatisation of the story (it is happily guessed) was first prompted by a visit paid by Lord Leicester's company of players to the Court of Helsingör (Elsinore) in 1585-6. The troupe returned to England in the following year, and may have brought back the play *in posse* or, likely enough, *in esse*—either as one they had found ready-made in the Danish *repertoire*, or as one they themselves had patched up on a Danish legend to please a Danish audience.

Saxo's story, as rendered by Belleforest, is primitive and bloody. It includes the marriage of Geruthe (Gertrude) with Horvvendille, governor of Diethmarsen, and the birth of their son Amleth (Hamlet); the murder of Horvvendille by his brother Fengon, who subsequently marries Geruthe; Amlet's pretence of madness to compass his revenge; his interview with his mother in her private chamber, and his slaying of an eavesdropping courtier; his despatch by his uncle to England, with secret orders for his assassination; his discovery of the plot, return, and revenge. Mr. F. S. Boas has pointed out,[1] as good internal evidence for assigning the 'Lost *Hamlet*' to Thomas Kyd, that the additions of the famous 'Play Scene' and the duel with Laertes are but variants of very similar situations in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedie.*

'But what does it really matter, at this distance of time, whether Kyd, or So-and-so, or even Shakespeare himself, wrote the lost *Hamlet*?' This, and no more; that if *Hamlet*, as we have it, was patched on old stuff, we have an intelligible explanation, or at least an

[1] Introduction to the Works of Thomas Kyd. Edited by F. S. Boas. Oxford, 1901.

excuse, for several things that continue to puzzle critics in the play as it stands. Let us take one instance, and reason from what is known to what can only be guessed. Hamlet's conduct towards Ophelia is admittedly puzzling; his brutality not only offends but sometimes bewilders us; we cannot see what he and Shakespeare are driving at. But when we learn that in Belleforest's story Ophelia is a lady of somewhat easy virtue, we divine readily enough that Shakespeare, while making a pure maid of her, somehow neglected here and there to keep up Hamlet's altered regard to a corresponding pitch; and when we remember that, on the Elizabethan stage, madness—so pitiful to us—was by tradition treated as something essentially comic and as fair game (let Malvolio witness) for the brutallest horseplay; and when we tell ourselves, incredible as it may seem, that the scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia were likely enough, and before Shakespeare took them in hand, devised to raise a laugh; then we can easily guess that a number of small riddles in *Hamlet* would be solved if we could only find a copy of the lost play.

Let us even take up—to lay it down in a moment—the great question of Hamlet's madness, over which the greatest critics have wasted so much subtlety. In Belleforest—who translates from Saxo—Hamlet deliberately pretends to be mad, the better to compass his uncle's murder. There at any rate is the original explanation; and in the play Shakespeare repeats it, for Hamlet explicitly forbids his mother to tell King Claudius the truth—

> 'That I essentially am not in madness,
> But mad in craft.'

'But,' says the objector, 'on the other hand, in asking pardon of Laertes before the sword-play, Hamlet just as explicitly declares that he *is* mad'—

> 'What I have done,
> That might your nature, honour and exception
> Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness . . .
> His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy'—

—with the rest of it. To this might be answered. 'Quite so; he is keeping up the fiction to the end. How shall a polite speech before the Court weigh against a secret told to his mother in her closet?' But questions of this sort have no profit in them, and the real answer is at once simpler and subtler. It is simpler, because as we read the play, Hamlet explains himself. 'Is he an intelligible man?' 'Yes.' 'Then what more do you want?' 'To know if he was really mad.' 'Mad?' But madness is a thing of degree. We meet and pass every day large numbers of men, more or less 'cracked,' who nevertheless go about their

business, and live out their lives as citizens, under no threat of restraint. Doubtless nine-tenths of the courtiers at Elsinore would have certified Hamlet for mad, which was just what Hamlet wished them to believe. But though Hamlet thought that Claudius thought him mad, Claudius —who had every reason to judge carefully—believed him to be dangerously sane. He was, in fact, neither—and both. Given a strong reason; given a terrible blow which sets that reason rocking violently on its pivot; we judge it to be mad more or less, or we judge it to be sane, according as our eyes observe the arc of oscillation or the point of equilibrium. For my part, I should reserve the word 'mad' for minds that are evidently thrown off the pivot. Such was Ophelia's, but such was not Hamlet's.

But the answer, could we follow down the story from Belleforest's tale to Shakespeare's completed play, tracking it as it conceded something here to popular taste or stage tradition, and then broke away to dare an innovation, would for a certainty also be extremely subtle. For Shakespeare—it cannot be too steadily borne in mind—was a working playwright. He took his materials and his limitations as he found them; and probably there never lived a man of first-rate genius more nobly indisposed to quarrel with his public. If the plot and texture of the play be closely examined, these five acts into which he has crammed so much wonderful language and so much dreadful knowledge of good and evil—of evil especially—charging words and thought and action, moreover, through their interstices with so awful a sense of fate, are but a dramatic framework of the ordinary Elizabethan type; with a crude butchery to finish, to suit the horror-loving Elizabethan public. Common consent proclaims *Hamlet* his masterpiece. To share in that consent we must neglect the play for the things inside it. As a play—as a work of art—it will not compare with *Othello*.

Obscurity is usually unpopular. But by sheer greatness *Hamlet* has made its obscurity help its popularity. Its darkest sayings have passed into commonplaces of everyday speech; painful students are always groping in it to discover things valuable and worthless; and to interpret Hamlet is the fascinating goal of every great actor's ambition—for the character comes so near, in intricacy and diversity, to actual life that (even as men with the conduct of their actual lives) a few may memorably succeed, while none can finally attain.

A. T. QUILLER-COUCH.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CLAUDIUS, king of Denmark.
HAMLET, son to the late, and nephew to the present king.
POLONIUS, lord chamberlain.
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet.
LAERTES, son to Polonius.
VOLTIMAND,
CORNELIUS,
ROSENCRANTZ,
GUILDENSTERN,
OSRIC,
A Gentleman,
} courtiers.
A Priest.
MARCELLUS,
BERNARDO,
} officers.
FRANCISCO, a soldier.
REYNALDO, servant to Polonius.
Players.
Two Clowns, grave-diggers.
FORTINBRAS, prince of Norway.
A Captain.
English Ambassadors.

GERTRUDE, queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet.
OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers,
and other Attendants.

Ghost of Hamlet's Father.

SCENE—*Denmark.*

Act. I.

SCENE I

Elsinore. A platform before the castle.

FRANCISCO *at his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

BER. Who's there?

FRAN. Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BER. Long live the king!

FRAN. Bernardo?

BER. He.

FRAN. You come most carefully upon your hour.

BER. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRAN. For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

BER. Have you had quiet guard?

FRAN. Not a mouse stirring.

BER. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRAN. I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

HOR. Friends to this ground.

MAR. And liegemen to the Dane.

FRAN. Give you good night.
MAR. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?
FRAN. Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night. [*Exit.*
MAR. Holla! Bernardo!
BER. Say,
What, is Horatio there?
HOR. A piece of him.
BER. Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus.
MAR. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?
BER. I have seen nothing.
MAR. Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.
HOR. Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.
BER. Sit down awhile;
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we have two nights seen.
HOR. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
BER. Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one,—

Enter Ghost.

MAR. Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!
BER. In the same figure, like the king that 's dead.
MAR. Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.
BER. Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.
HOR. *Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.*
BER. It would be spoke to.
MAR. Question it, Horatio.
HOR. What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!
MAR. It is offended.
BER. See, it stalks away!
HOR. Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!
[*Exit* Ghost.
MAR. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.
BER. How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on 't?
HOR. Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.
MAR. Is it not like the king?
HOR. As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armour he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated;
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
'Tis strange.

MAR. Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
HOR. In what particular thought to work I know not;
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.
MAR. Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land,
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart for implements of war;
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:
Who is't that can inform me?
HOR. That can I;
At least the whisper goes so. Our last king,
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet—
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him—
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a seal'd compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:
Against the which, a moiety competent
Was gaged by our king; which had return'd
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant
And carriage of the article design'd,

His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't: which is no other—
As it doth well appear unto our state—
But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands
So by his father lost: and this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch and the chief head
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.

BER. I think it be no other but e'en so:
Well may it sort, that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch; so like the king
That was and is the question of these wars.

HOR. A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun: and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:
And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

Re-enter Ghost.

But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it: stay, and speak! [*Cock crows.*] Stop it, Marcellus.

MAR. Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HOR. Do, if it will not stand.

BER. 'Tis here!

HOR. 'Tis here!

MAR. 'Tis gone! [*Exit* Ghost.

We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

BER. It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

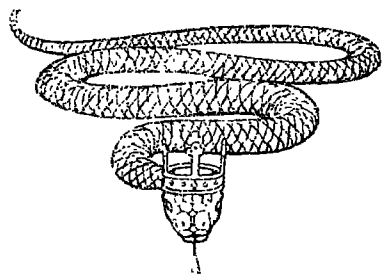
HOR. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat

Act II. Scene I.

Pol. *You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,*
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour.

Rey. *My lord, I did intend it.*

Page 41




R. SIEMOND

Awake the god of day; and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

MAR. It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

HOR. So have I heard and do in part believe it.
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill:
Break we our watch up; and, by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him:
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MAR. Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

A room of state in the castle.

Enter the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, *and* Attendants.

KING. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,—
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,

Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,—
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose,—to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king more than the scope
Of these delated articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

COR. } In that and all things will we show our duty.
VOL. }

KING. We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAER. My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POL. He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!
—But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

HAM. [*Aside.*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAM. Not so, my lord: I am too much i' the sun.

QUEEN. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

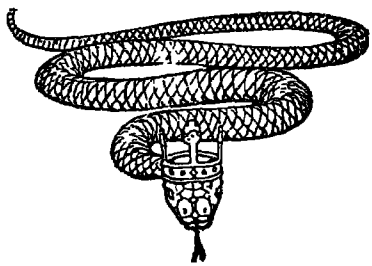
HAM. Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAM. Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not 'seems.'
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,

Act II. Scene II.

Pol. *Away, I do beseech you, both away:*
I'll board him presently. Page 52





Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING. 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father:
But, you must know, your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow: but to persever
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief:
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd:
For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
'This must be so.' We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,

You are the most immediate to our throne;
And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son,
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire:
And we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

HAM. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

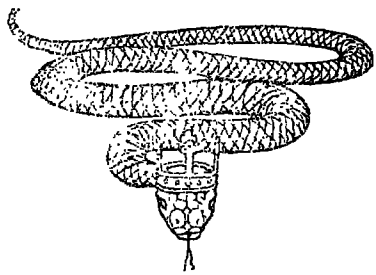
KING. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

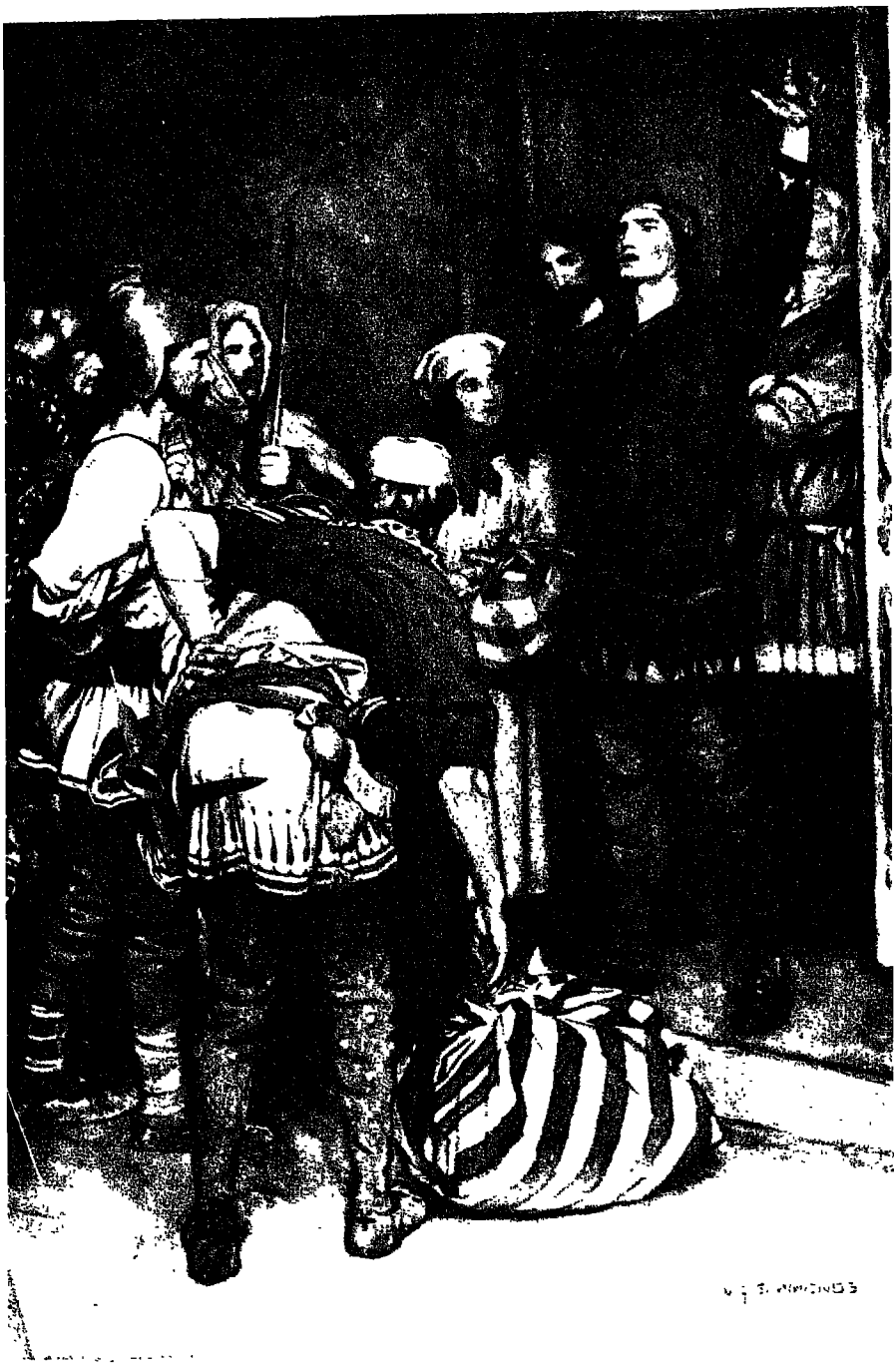
[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

HAM. O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead! nay, not so much, not two:

ACT II. Scene II.

HAM. *Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see.* Page 61





So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she—
O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month:
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not nor it cannot come to good:
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS, *and* BERNARDO.

HOR. Hail to your lordship!
HAM. I am glad to see you well:
Horatio,—or I do forget myself.
HOR. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
HAM. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus?

MAR. My good lord—
HAM. I am very glad to see you. Good even, sir.
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?
HOR. A truant disposition, good my lord.
HAM. I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do my ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.
HOR. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
HAM. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
HOR. Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.
HAM. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked-meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
My father!—methinks I see my father.
HOR. O where, my lord?
HAM. In my mind's eye, Horatio.
HOR. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
HAM. He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.
HOR. My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
HAM. Saw? who?
HOR. My lord, the king your father.
HAM. The king my father!
HOR. Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear, till I may deliver,

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THE LEICESTER GALLERIES,
Leicester Square, London,

to whom application should be made.

Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.

HAM. For God's love, let me hear.

HOR. Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch:
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes: I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

HAM. But where was this?

MAR. My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

HAM. Did you not speak to it?

HOR. My lord, I did;
But answer made it none: yet once methought
It lifted up its head and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak;
But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
And vanish'd from our sight.

HAM. 'Tis very strange.
HOR. As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.
HAM. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night?
MAR. BER. We do, my lord.
HAM. Arm'd say you?
MAR. BER. Arm'd, my lord.
HAM. From top to toe?
MAR. BER. My lord, from head to foot.
HAM. Then saw you not his face?
HOR. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.
HAM. What, look'd he frowningly?
HOR. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
HAM. Pale or red?
HOR. Nay, very pale.
HAM. And fix'd his eyes upon you?
HOR. Most constantly.
HAM. I would I had been there.
HOR. It would have much amazed you.
HAM. Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?
HOR. While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
MAR. BER. Longer, longer.
HOR. Not when I saw't.
HAM. His beard was grizzled? no?

HOR. It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.
HAM. I will watch to-night;
Perchance 'twill walk again.
HOR. I warrant it will.
HAM. If it assume my noble father's person,
I 'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue:
I will requite your loves. So, fare you well:
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I 'll visit you.
ALL. Our duty to your honour.
HAM. Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.
[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.
My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play; would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
[*Exit.*

SCENE III

A room in POLONIUS'S *house.*

Enter LAERTES *and* OPHELIA.

LAER. My necessaries are embark'd: farewell:
And, sister, as the winds give benefit
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.
OPH. Do you doubt that?
LAER. For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute,
No more.
OPH. No more but so?
LAER. Think it no more:
For nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will: but you must fear,
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;
For he himself is subject to his birth:
He may not, as unvalued persons do,

Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The safety and health of this whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPH. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.

LAER. O, fear me not.
I stay too long: but here my father comes.

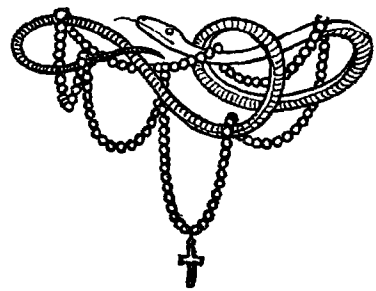
Enter POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.
POL. Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There; my blessing with thee!
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement,
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

ACT III. Scene II.

KING. *How fares our cousin Hamlet?*

HAM. *Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise crammed.* Page 82





This above all: to thine ownself be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

LAER. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POL. The time invites you; go; your servants tend.

LAER. Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well
What I have said to you.

OPH. 'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAER. Farewell. [*Exit.*

POL. What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPH. So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POL. Marry, well bethought:
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
If it be so—as so 'tis put on me, *impress*
And that in way of caution—I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you? give me up the truth.

OPH. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.

POL. Affection! pooh! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPH. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POL. Marry, I 'll teach you: think yourself a baby,
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,

Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;
Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus—you 'll tender me a fool.
OPH. My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.
POL. Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.
OPH. And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.
POL. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be something scanter of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you: in few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,
Not of that dye which their investments show.
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,
The better to beguile. This is for all:
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment leisure,
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you: come your ways.
OPH. I shall obey, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV

The platform.

Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS.

HAM. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.
HOR. It is a nipping and an eager air.
HAM. What hour now?
HOR. I think it lacks of twelve.
MAR. No, it is struck.
HOR. Indeed? I heard it not: it then draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.
[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.*
What does this mean, my lord?
HAM. The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
HOR. Is it a custom?
HAM. Ay, marry, is 't:
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west

Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth—wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin—
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners, that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
Their virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo—
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: the dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandal.

Enter Ghost.

HOR. Look, my lord, it comes!

HAM. Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee: I 'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!

Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

[Ghost *beckons* HAMLET.

HOR. It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

MAR. Look, with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground:
But do not go with it.

HOR. No, by no means.

HAM. It will not speak; then I will follow it.

HOR. Do not, my lord.

HAM. Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again: I 'll follow it.

HOR. What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form,

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? think of it:
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.

HAM. It waves me still.
Go on; I'll follow thee.

MAR. You shall not go, my lord.

HAM. Hold off your hands.

HOR. Be ruled; you shall not go.

HAM. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me:
I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt* Ghost *and* HAMLET.

HOR. He waxes desperate with imagination.

MAR. Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

HOR. Have after. To what issue will this come?

MAR. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HOR. Heaven will direct it.

MAR. Nay, let's follow him.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V

Another part of the platform.

Enter Ghost *and* HAMLET.

HAM. Whither wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.

GHOST. Mark me.

HAM. I will.

GHOST. My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAM. Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST. Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

HAM. Speak; I am bound to hear.

GHOST. So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAM. What?

GHOST. I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,

Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand an end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

HAM. O God!

GHOST. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAM. Murder!

GHOST. Murder most foul, as in the best it is;
But this most foul, strange and unnatural.

HAM. Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

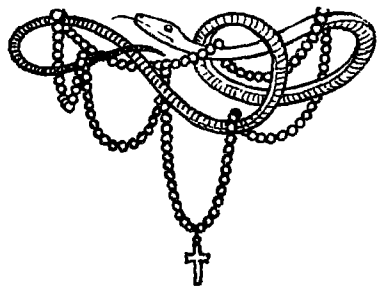
GHOST. I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear:
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAM. O my prophetic soul!
My uncle!

GHOST. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,—
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:

Act III. Scene II.

HAM. *He poisons him i' the garden for his estate*
His name's Gonzago. Page 88





O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.
But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body,
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd:
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled,

No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head:
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me. [*Exit.*

HAM. O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?
And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by heaven!
O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
My tables,—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;

At least I 'm sure it may be so in Denmark:
[*Writing.*
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is 'Adieu, adieu! remember me.'
I have sworn 't.

MAR.
HOR. } [*Within.*] My lord, my lord!

MAR. [*Within.*] Lord Hamlet!
HOR. [*Within.*] Heaven secure him!
HAM. So be it!
HOR. [*Within.*] Hillo, ho, ho, my lord!
HAM. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

MAR. How is 't, my noble lord?
HOR. What news, my lord?
HAM. O, wonderful!
HOR. Good my lord, tell it.
HAM. No; you will reveal it.
HOR. Not I, my lord, by heaven.
MAR. Nor I, my lord.
HAM. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?
But you 'll be secret?

HOR.
MAR. } Ay, by heaven, my lord.

HAM. There 's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he 's an arrant knave.
HOR. There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

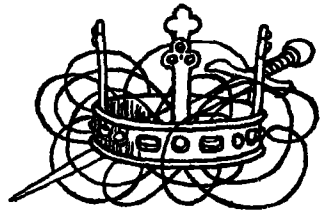
HAM. Why, right; you are i' the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
You, as your business and desire shall point you;
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is; and for my own poor part,
Look you, I 'll go pray.
HOR. These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.
HAM. I 'm sorry they offend you, heartily;
Yes, faith, heartily.
HOR. There 's no offence, my lord.
HAM. Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you:
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.
HOR. What is 't, my lord? we will.
HAM. Never make known what you have seen to-night.
HOR. } My lord, we will not.
MAR. }
HAM. Nay, but swear 't.
HOR. In faith,
My lord, not I.
MAR. Nor I, my lord, in faith.
HAM. Upon my sword.
MAR. We have sworn, my lord, already.
HAM. Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.
GHOST. [*Beneath.*] Swear.

HAM. Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?
Come on: you hear this fellow in the cellarage
Consent to swear.
HOR. Propose the oath, my lord.
HAM. Never to speak of this that you have seen,
Swear by my sword.
GHOST. [*Beneath.*] Swear.
HAM. Hic et ubique? then we'll shift our ground.
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword;
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.
GHOST. [*Beneath.*] Swear.
HAM. Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.
HOR. O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
HAM. And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
But come;
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As 'Well, well, we know,' or 'We could, an if we would,'

Or 'If we list to speak,' or 'There be, an if they might,'
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me: this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you
Swear.

GHOST. [*Beneath.*] Swear.

HAM. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! [*They swear.*] So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you:
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do, to express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint: O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let's go together. [*Exeunt.*

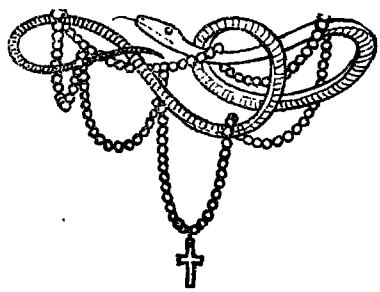


Act. II.

ACT III. Scene II.

KING. *Give me some light: away!*
ALL. *Lights, lights, lights!*

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SCENE I

A room in POLONIUS'S *house.*

Enter POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO.

POL. Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.
REY. I will, my lord.
POL. You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behaviour.
REY. My lord, I did intend it.
POL. Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense; and finding
By this encompassment and drift of question
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him;
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him': do you mark this, Reynaldo?
REY. Ay, very well, my lord.
POL. 'And in part him; but' you may say 'not well:
But if 't be he I mean, he 's very wild;
Addicted so and so': and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank

As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

REY. As gaming, my lord.

POL. Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling:
You may go so far.

REY. My lord, that would dishonour him.

POL. Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

REY. But, my good lord,—

POL. Wherefore should you do this?

REY. Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

POL. Marry, sir, here's my drift;
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant:
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so, or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,'

According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

REY. Very good, my lord.

POL. And then, sir, does he this—he does—what was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave?

REY. At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and 'gentleman.'

POL. At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry;
He closes thus: 'I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,
Or then, or then, with such, or such, and, as you say,
There was a' gaming, there o'ertook in 's rouse;
There falling out at tennis': or perchance,
'I saw him enter such a house of sale,'
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth.
See you now;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out:
So by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

REY. My lord, I have.

POL. God be wi' you; fare you well.

REY. Good my lord!

POL. Observe his inclination in yourself

REY. I shall, my lord.

POL. And let him ply his music.

REY. Well, my lord.

POL. Farewell! [*Exit* REYNALDO.

Enter OPHELIA.

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

OPH. O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

POL. With what, i' the name of God?

OPH. My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;
No hat upon his head: his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POL. Mad for thy love?

OPH. My lord, I do not know;
But truly I do fear it.

POL. What said he?

OPH. He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

POL. Come, go with me: I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
What, have you given him any hard words of late?
OPH. No, my good lord; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.
POL. That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgement
I had not quoted him: I fear'd he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee; but beshrew my jealousy!
By heaven, it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might
move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.
Come. [*Exeunt*

SCENE II

A room in the castle.

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants.

KING. Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
That, being of so young days brought up with him,
And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and haviour,
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

QUEEN. Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you;
And sure I am two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you

To show us so much gentry and good will
As to expend your time with us awhile,
For the supply and profit of our hope,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

ROS. Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

GUIL. But we both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.

KING. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

GUIL. Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him!

QUEEN. Ay, amen!

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and some* Attendants.

Enter POLONIUS.

POL. The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.

KING. Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POL. Have I, my lord? I assure my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious king:

And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

KING. O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

POL. Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

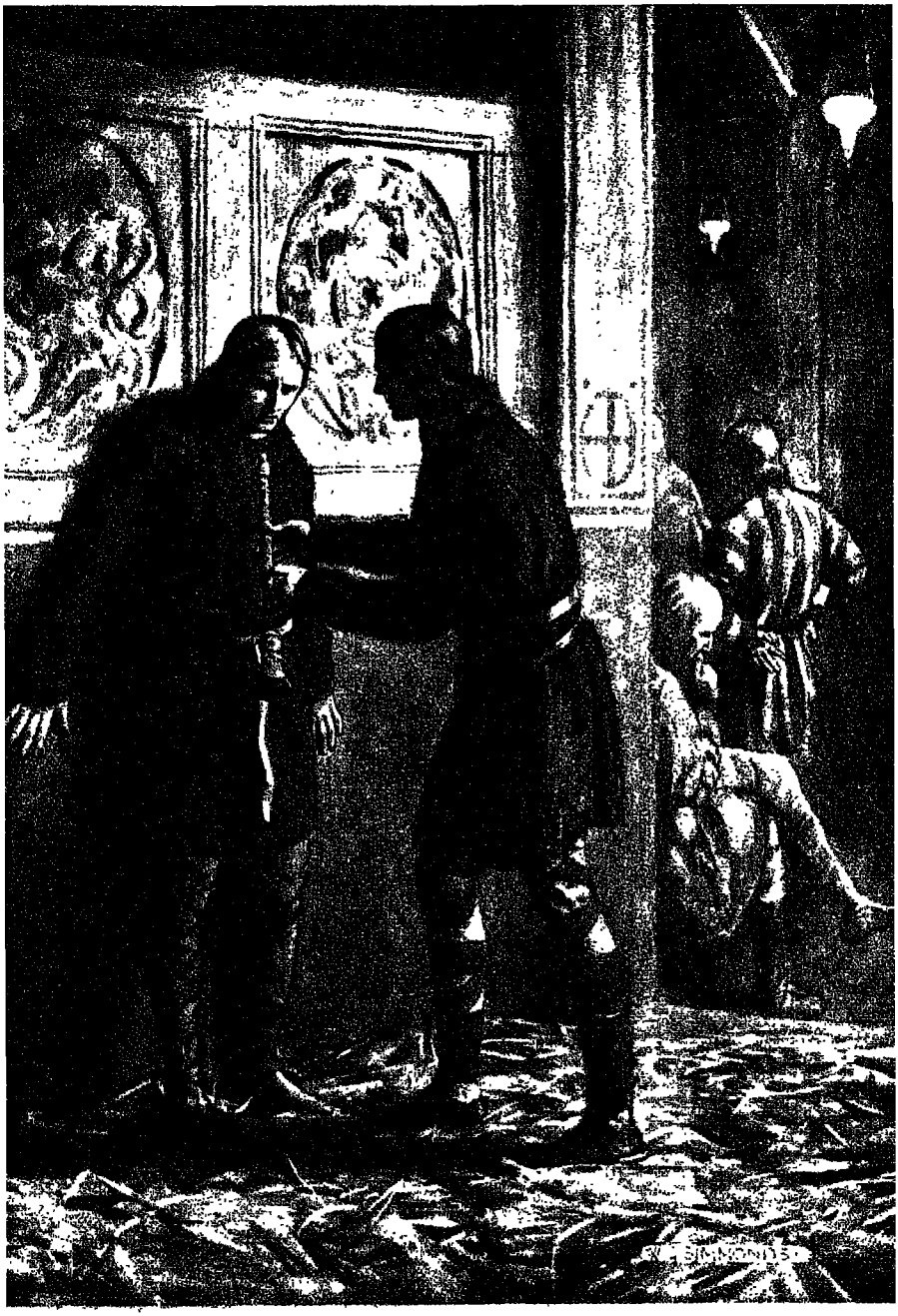
KING. Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.
[*Exit* POLONIUS.
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

QUEEN. I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

KING. Well, we shall sift him.

Re-enter POLONIUS, *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.
Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLT. Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But, better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your highness: whereat grieved,
That so his sickness, age and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys:
Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,



Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,
And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an entreaty, herein further shown,
[*Giving a paper.*
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.

KING. It likes us well;
And at our more consider'd time we 'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour:
Go to your rest; at night we 'll feast together:
Most welcome home!
[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

POL. This business is well ended.
My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN. More matter, with less art.

POL. Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;

But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
Perpend.
I have a daughter—have while she is mine—
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise
[*Reads*]

'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'—

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:
[*Reads*]

'In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.'

QUEEN. Came this from Hamlet to her?
POL. Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

[*Reads*] 'Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

'Thine evermore, most dear lady,
whilst this machine is to him,
HAMLET.'

This in obedience hath my daughter shown me,
And more above, hath his solicitings,

As they fell out by time, by means and place,
All given to mine ear.
KING. But how hath she
Received his love?
POL. What do you think of me?
KING. As of a man faithful and honourable.
POL. I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing—
As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me—what might you
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;
This must not be': and then I prescripts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he repulsed, a short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves
And all we mourn for.
KING. Do you think this?
QUEEN. It may be, very like.
POL. Hath there been such a time, I 'ld fain know that,

That I have positively said ''Tis so,'
When it proved otherwise?

KING. Not that I know.

POL. [*Pointing to his head and shoulder.*] Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

KING. How may we try it further?

POL. You know, sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

QUEEN. So he does indeed.

POL. At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
Be you and I behind an arras then;
Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

KING. We will try it.

QUEEN. But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

POL. Away, I do beseech you, both away:
I'll board him presently.

[*Exeunt* KING, QUEEN, *and* Attendants.

Enter HAMLET, *reading*.

O, give me leave:
How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAM. Well, God-a-mercy.

POL. Do you know me, my lord?

HAM. Excellent well: you are a fishmonger.

POL. Not I, my lord.

HAM. Then I would you were so honest a man.

POL. Honest, my lord!

HAM. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

POL. That's very true, my lord.

HAM. For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?

POL. I have, my lord.

HAM. Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive,—friend, look to 't.

POL. [*Aside.*] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again. What do you read, my lord?

HAM. Words, words, words.

POL. What is the matter, my lord?

HAM. Between who?

POL. I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

HAM. Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for

yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

POL. [*Aside.*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAM. Into my grave.

POL. Indeed, that 's out of the air. [*Aside.*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.—My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAM. You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.

POL. Fare you well, my lord,

HAM. These tedious old fools!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

POL. You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

ROS. [*To* POLONIUS.] God save you, sir!

[*Exit* POLONIUS.

GUIL. My honoured lord!

ROS. My most dear lord!

HAM. My excellent good friends? How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?

ROS. As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUIL. Happy, in that we are not over-happy;
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAM. Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROS. Neither, my lord.

HAM. Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours? What's the news?

ROS. None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAM. Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

GUIL. Prison, my lord!

HAM. Denmark's a prison.

ROS. Then is the world one.

HAM. A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROS. We think not so, my lord.

HAM. Why, then 'tis none to you: for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

ROS. Why, then your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

HAM. O God, I could be bounded in a nut-shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

GUIL. Which dreams indeed are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAM. A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROS. Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAM. Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs

and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROS. } We'll wait upon you.
GUIL. }

HAM. No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROS. To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAM. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUIL. What should we say, my lord?

HAM. Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROS. To what end, my lord?

HAM. That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no.

ROS. [*Aside to* GUILDENSTERN.] What say you?

HAM. [*Aside.*] Nay, then, I have an eye of you.—If you love me, hold not off.

GUIL. My lord, we were sent for.

HAM. I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor women neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROS. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAM. Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

ROS. To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAM. He that plays the king shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his

part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for 't. What players are they?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

HAM. How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Ros. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

HAM. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

Ros. No, indeed, are they not.

HAM. How comes it? do they grow rusty?

Ros. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but, there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for 't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages —so they call them—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

HAM. What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players—as it is most like, if their means are no better—their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?

Ros. Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them

to controversy: there was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

HAM. Is't possible?

GUIL. O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAM. Do the boys carry it away?

ROS. Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

HAM. It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets within.*

GUIL. There are the players.

HAM. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outwards, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUIL. In what, my dear lord?

HAM. I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw

Re-enter POLONIUS.

POL. Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAM. Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each

ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

Ros. Happily he 's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAM. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas so indeed.

POL. My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAM. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

POL. The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAM. Buz, buz!

POL. Upon my honour,—

HAM. Then came each actor on his ass,—

POL. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

HAM. O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POL. What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAM. Why,

> 'One fair daughter, and no more,
> The which he loved passing well.'

POL. [*Aside.*] Still on my daughter.

HAM. Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

POL. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAM. Nay, that follows not.

POL. What follows, then, my lord?

HAM. Why,

'As by lot, God wot,'

and then, you know,

'It came to pass, as most like it was,'—

the first row of pious chanson will show you more; for look, where my abridgement comes.

Enter four or five Players.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, my old friend! thy face is valanced since I saw thee last: comest thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By 'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We 'll e'en to 't like French falconers, fly at anything we see: we 'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PL. What speech, my good lord?

HAM. I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviare to the general: but it was—as I received it, and others, whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine—an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no

matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: 'twas Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: if it live in your memory, begin at this line: let me see, let me see;

'The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,'—

It is not so: it begins with 'Pyrrhus

The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry more dismal; head to foot
Now is he total gules; horridly trick'd
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and damned light
To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,
And this o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

So, proceed you.

POL. 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

FIRST PL. 'Anon he finds him
Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command: unequal match'd,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;

But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven
As low as to the fiends!

POL. This is too long.

HAM. It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Prithee, say on: come to Hecuba.

FIRST PL. 'But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen—'

HAM. 'The mobled queen?'

POL. That's good; 'mobled queen' is good.

FIRST PL. 'Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood; and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up:
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced:
But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
And passion in the gods.'

POL. Look, whether he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes. Prithee, no more.

HAM. 'Tis well; I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

POL. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAM. God's bodykins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

POL. Come, sirs.

HAM. Follow him, friends: we 'll hear a play to-morrow. [*Exit* POLONIUS *with all the* Players *but the* First.] Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

FIRST PL. Ay, my lord.

HAM. We 'll ha 't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not?

FIRST PL. Ay, my lord.

HAM. Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit* First Player.] My good friends, I 'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROS. Good my lord.

HAM. Ay, so, God be wi' ye.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What 's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the
throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Ha?
'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: bloody, bloody villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!
Fie upon 't! foh! About, my brain! Hum, I have
heard

That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

[*Exit.*

Act. III.

SCENE I

A room in the castle.

Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING. And can you, by no drift of circumstance,
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?
ROS. He does confess he feels himself distracted;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.
GUIL. Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.
QUEEN. Did he receive you well?
ROS. Most like a gentleman.
GUIL. But with much forcing of his disposition.
ROS. Niggard of question, but of our demands -
Most free in his reply.
QUEEN. Did you assay him
To any pastime?
ROS. Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him,
And there did seem in him a kind of joy

To hear of it: they are about the court,
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

POL. 'Tis most true:
And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.

KING. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

ROS. We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia:
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If 't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN. I shall obey you.
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

OPH. Madam, I wish it may.

[*Exit* QUEEN.

POL. Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,

We will bestow ourselves. [*To* OPHELIA.] Read on
this book;
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,—
'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

KING. [*Aside.*] O, 'tis too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burthen!

POL. I hear him coming: let 's withdraw, my lord.
[*Exeunt* KING *and* POLONIUS.

Enter HAMLET.

HAM. To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPH. Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day

HAM. I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

OPH. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

HAM. No, not I:
I never gave you aught.

OPH. My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And with them words of so sweet breath composed

As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

HAM. Ha, ha! are you honest?

OPH. My lord?

HAM. Are you fair?

OPH. What means your lordship?

HAM. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

OPH. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

HAM. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

OPH. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAM. You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

OPH. I was the more deceived.

HAM. Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves

all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

OPH. At home, my lord.

HAM. Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in 's own house. Farewell.

OPH. O, help him, you sweet heavens!

HAM. If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

OPH. O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAM. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on 't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live: the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [*Exit.*

OPH. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,

Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Re-enter KING *and* POLONIUS.

KING. Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger: which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply the seas and countries different
With variable objects shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

POL. It shall do well: but yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please:
But, if you hold it fit, after the play
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief: let her be round with him;
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear

Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him, or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

KING. It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

A hall in the castle.

Enter HAMLET *and* Players.

HAM. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus: but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

FIRST PL. I warrant your honour.

HAM. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to

hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

FIRST PL. I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

HAM. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready.

[*Exeunt* Players.

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord! will the king hear this piece of work?

POL. And the queen too, and that presently.

HAM. Bid the players make haste. [*Exit* POLONIUS.
Will you two help to hasten them?

ROS. }
GUIL. } We will, my lord.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

HAM. What ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO.

HOR. Here, sweet lord, at your service.
HAM. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.
HOR. O, my dear lord,—
HAM. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger

To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. Something too much of this.
There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe my uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after we will both our judgements join
In censure of his seeming.

HOR. Well, my lord:
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

HAM. They are coming to the play; I must be idle:
Get you a place.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches.*

KING. How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAM. Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

KING. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

HAM. No, nor mine now. [*To* POLONIUS.] My lord, you played once i' the university, you say?

POL. That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.

HAM. What did you enact?

POL. I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was killed i' the Capitol: Brutus killed me.

HAM. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. Be the players ready?

ROS. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN. Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAM. No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.

POL. [*To the* KING.] O, ho! do you mark that?

OPH. You are merry, my lord.

HAM. Who, I?

OPH. Ay, my lord.

HAM. O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within 's two hours.

OPH. Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

HAM. So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by'r lady, he must build churches then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is 'For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot.'

Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters.

Enter a King *and a* Queen *very lovingly; the* Queen *embracing him and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck: lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the* King's *ears, and exit. The* Queen *returns; finds the* King *dead, and makes passionate action. The* Poisoner, *with some two or three* Mutes, *comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The* Poisoner *wooes the* Queen *with gifts: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.* [*Exeunt.*

OPH. What means this, my lord?

HAM. Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.

OPH. Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter Prologue.

HAM. We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they 'll tell all.

PROL. For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently. [*Exit.*

HAM. Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

OPH. 'Tis brief, my lord.

HAM. As woman's love.

Enter two Players, King *and* Queen.

PL. KING. Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

PL. QUEEN. So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity;
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
And as my love is sized, my fear is so:
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

PL. KING. Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

PL. QUEEN. O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

HAM. [*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood.
PL. QUEEN. The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love:
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.
PL. KING. I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth, but poor validity:
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree;
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy:
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change;
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies;
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies.
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend;
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But, orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run

That our devices still are overthrown:
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own:
So think thou wilt no second husband wed;
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

PL. QUEEN. Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!
Sport and repose lock from me day and night!
To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope!
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy
Meet what I would have well and it destroy!
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

HAM. If she should break it now!

PL. KING. 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile;
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep. [*Sleeps.*

PL. QUEEN. Sleep rock thy brain;
And never come mischance between us twain! [*Exit.*

HAM. Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN. The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

HAM. O, but she'll keep her word.

KING. Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?

HAM. No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

KING. What do you call the play?

HAM. The Mouse-trap. Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you

shall see anon; 'tis a knavish piece of work: but what o' that? your majesty and we that have free souls, it touches us not: let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

Enter LUCIANUS.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

OPH. You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

HAM. I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.

OPH. Still better, and worse.

HAM. So you must take your husbands. Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come: 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.'

LUC. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp immediately.
[*Pours the poison into the sleeper's ear.*

HAM. He poisons him i' the garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPH. The king rises.

HAM. What, frighted with false fire?

QUEEN. How fares my lord?

POL. Give o'er the play.

KING. Give me some light: away!

ALL. Lights, lights, lights!

[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

HAM. Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The heart ungallèd play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
Thus runs the world away.
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

HOR. Half a share.

HAM. A whole one, I.
For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very—pajock.

HOR. You might have rhymed.

HAM. O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

HOR. Very well, my lord.

HAM. Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HOR. I did very well note him.

HAM. Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the recorders!
For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.
Come, some music!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

GUIL. Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAM. Sir, a whole history.

GUIL. The king, sir,—

HAM. Ay, sir, what of him?

GUIL. Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

HAM. With drink, sir?

GUIL. No, my lord, rather with choler.

HAM. Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to the doctor: for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

GUIL. Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from my affair.

HAM. I am tame, sir: pronounce.

GUIL. The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

HAM. You are welcome.

GUIL. Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

HAM. Sir, I cannot.

GUIL. What, my lord?

HAM. Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: my mother, you say,—

ROS. Then thus she says; your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

HAM. O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.

ROS. She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

HAM. We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

ROS. My lord, you once did love me.

HAM. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROS. Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do surely bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

HAM. Sir, I lack advancement.

ROS. How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

HAM. Ay, sir, but 'While the grass grows,'—the proverb is something musty.

Re-enter Players *with recorders.*

O, the recorders! let me see one. To withdraw with you:—why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

GUIL. O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAM. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

GUIL. My lord, I cannot.

HAM. I pray you.

GUIL. Believe me, I cannot.

HAM. I do beseech you.

GUIL. I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAM. 'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your

mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

GUIL. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

HAM. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me yet you cannot play upon me.

Enter POLONIUS.

God bless you, sir!

POL. My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

HAM. Do you see yonder cloud that 's almost in shape of a camel?

POL. By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

HAM. Methinks it is like a weasel.

POL. It is backed like a weasel.

HAM. Or like a whale?

POL. Very like a whale.

HAM. Then I will come to my mother by and by. [*Aside.*] They fool me to the top of my bent.—I will come by and by.

POL. I will say so. [*Exit* POLONIUS.

HAM. 'By and by' is easily said. Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites;
How in my words soever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent! [*Exit.*

SCENE III

A room in the castle.

Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING. I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you:
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

GUIL. We will ourselves provide:
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty.

ROS. The single and peculiar life is bound,
With all the strength and armour of the mind,
To keep itself from noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,

Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

KING. Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

ROS. }
GUIL. } We will haste us.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Enter POLONIUS.

POL. My lord, he 's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I 'll convey myself,
To hear the process; I 'll warrant she'll tax him home:
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege:
I 'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

KING. Thanks, dear my lord.

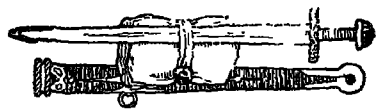
[*Exit* POLONIUS.

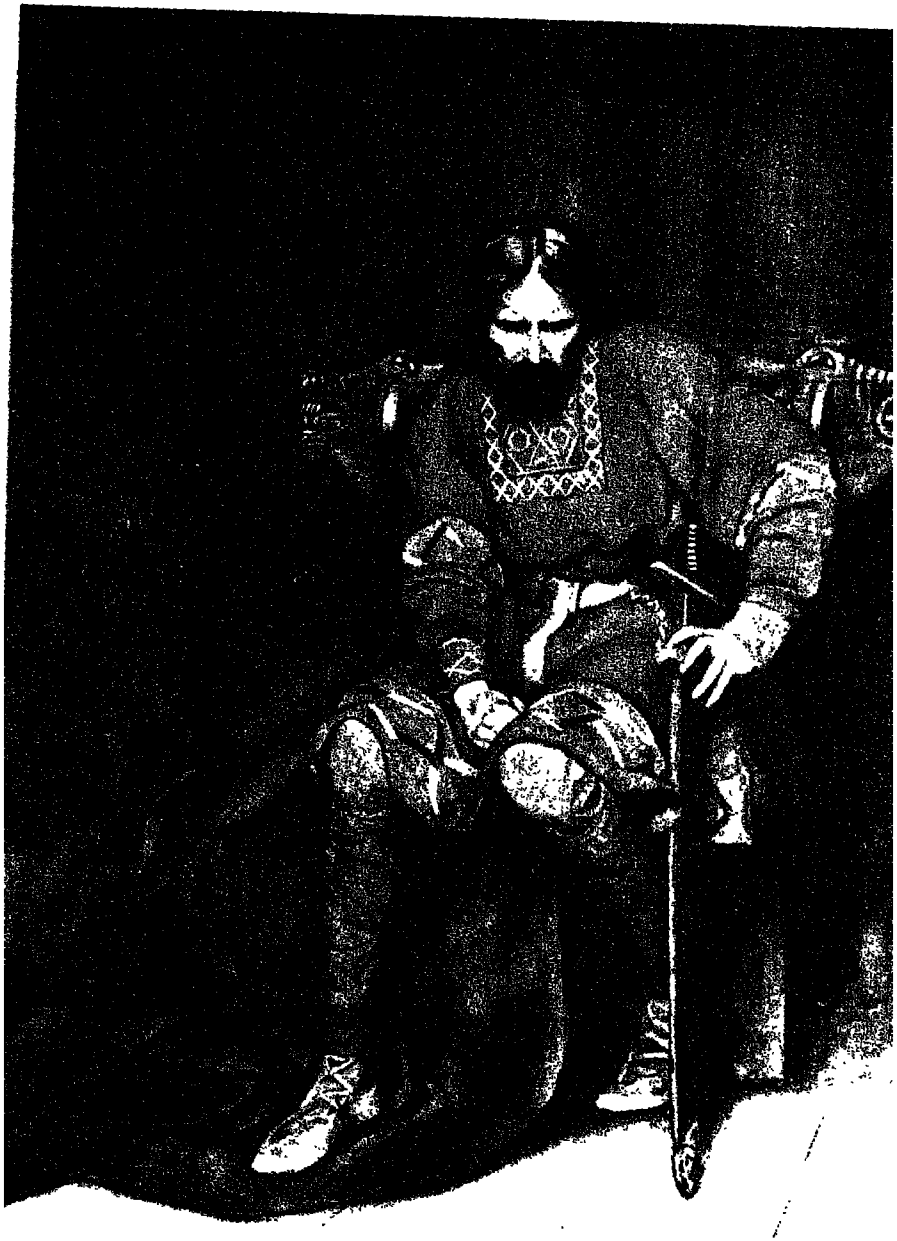
O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand

Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I 'll look up;
My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.
May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can: what can it not?
Yet what can it when one can not repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engaged! Help, angels! make assay!
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well. [*Retires and kneels.*

ACT IV. Scene III.

KING. *Do it, England;*
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me. Page 115





W.G. SIMMONDS

Enter HAMLET.

HAM. Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I 'll do 't: and so he goes to heaven;
And so am I revenged. That would be scann'd:
A villain kills my father; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands who knows save Heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him: and am I then revenged,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?
No!
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At game, a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in 't;
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. [*Exit.*

KING. [*Rising.*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV

The QUEEN'S *closet.*

Enter QUEEN *and* POLONIUS.

POL. He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.

HAM. [*Within.*] Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN. I'll warrant you, fear me not. Withdraw, I hear him coming.

[POLONIUS *hides behind the arras.*

Enter HAMLET.

HAM. Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAM. Mother, you have my father much offended

QUEEN. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAM. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN. Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAM. What's the matter now?

QUEEN. Have you forgot me?

HAM. No, by the rood, not so;
You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And—would it were not so!—you are my mother.
QUEEN. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.
HAM. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.
QUEEN. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!
POL. [*Behind.*] What, ho! help, help, help!
HAM. [*Drawing.*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! [*Makes a pass through the arras.*
POL. [*Behind.*] O, I am slain! [*Falls and dies.*
QUEEN. O me, what hast thou done?
HAM. Nay, I know not: is it the king?
QUEEN. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!
HAM. A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
QUEEN. As kill a king!
HAM. Ay, lady, 'twas my word.
[*Lifts up the arras and discovers* POLONIUS.
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down,
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff,
If damned custom have not brass'd it so
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

QUEEN. What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
HAM. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.
QUEEN. Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?
HAM. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love, for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgement: and what judgement
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure that sense
Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was 't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn
And reason pandars will.

QUEEN. O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct. . . .
. . . . O, speak to me no more;
These words like daggers enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

HAM. A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!
QUEEN. No more!
HAM. A king of shreds and patches—

Enter Ghost.

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?
QUEEN. Alas, he's mad!
HAM. Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!
GHOST. Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul:
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:
Speak to her, Hamlet.
HAM. How is it with you, lady?
QUEEN. Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,

Start up and stand an end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

HAM. On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me;
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for blood.

QUEEN. To whom do you speak this?

HAM. Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN. Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAM. Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN. No, nothing but ourselves.

HAM. Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he lived!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

[*Exit* Ghost.

QUEEN. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

HAM. Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,

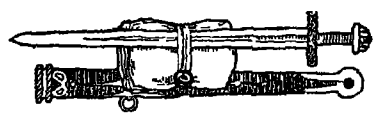
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN. O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAM. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to my uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence: the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either . . . the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be blest,
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,
[*Pointing to* POLONIUS.
I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:

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Ham. *Good sir, whose powers are these?*
Capt. *They are of Norway, sir.* Page 116





Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

QUEEN. What shall I do?

HAM. Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse;
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know;
For who, that 's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep
And break your own neck down.

QUEEN. Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

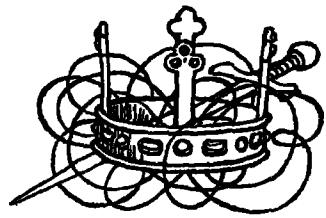
HAM. I must to England; you know that?

QUEEN. Alack,
I had forgot: 'tis so concluded on.

HAM. There's letters seal'd: and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petar: and 't shall go hard

But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon: O, 'tis most sweet.
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing:
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally;* HAMLET *dragging in* POLONIUS.



Act. IV.

SCENE I

A room in the castle

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING. There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves:
You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

QUEEN. Bestow this place on us a little while.
[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.
Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen to-night!

KING. What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

QUEEN. Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

KING. O heavy deed!
It had been so with us, had we been there:
His liberty is full of threats to all;
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,

This mad young man: but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit;
But, like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

QUEEN. To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

KING. O Gertrude, come away!
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;
And let them know, both what we mean to do,
And what's untimely done
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level as the cannon to his blank,
Transports his poison'd shot, may miss our name
And hit the woundless air. O, come away!
My soul is full of discord and dismay. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

Another room in the castle.

Enter HAMLET.

HAM. Safely stowed.

ROS. } [*Within.*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!
GUIL. }

HAM. But soft, what noise? who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

ROS. What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAM. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROS. Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence And bear it to the chapel.

HAM. Do not believe it.

ROS. Believe what?

HAM. That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge? what replication should be made by the son of a king?

ROS. Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAM. Ay, sir; that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to

be last swallowed: when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

ROS. I understand you not, my lord.

HAM. I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

ROS. My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

HAM. The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—

GUIL. A thing, my lord?

HAM. Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III

Another room in the castle.

Enter KING, *attended.*

KING. I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement, but their eyes:
And where 'tis so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ.

How now! what hath befall'n?

ROS. Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

KING. But where is he?

ROS. Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

KING. Bring him before us.

ROS. Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

Enter HAMLET *and* GUILDENSTERN.

KING. Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAM. At supper.

KING. At supper! where?

HAM. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that's the end.

KING. Alas, alas!

HAM. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING. What dost thou mean by this?

HAM. Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

KING. Where is Polonius?

HAM. In heaven; send thither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

KING. Go seek him there. [*To some* Attendants.

HAM. He will stay till you come. [*Exeunt* Attendants.

KING. Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done, must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready and the wind at help,
The associates tend, and everything is bent
For England.

HAM. For England?

KING. Ay, Hamlet.

HAM. Good.

KING. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

HAM. I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Farewell, dear mother.

KING. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAM. My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England! [*Exit.*

KING. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.
[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.
And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught—
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us—thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters congruing to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV

A plain in Denmark.

Enter FORTINBRAS, *a* Captain, *and* Soldiers *marching.*

FORT. Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king;
Tell him that by his license Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.
CAPT. I will do 't, my lord.
FORT. Go softly on.
[*Exeunt* FORTINBRAS *and* Soldiers.

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and others.*

HAM. Good sir, whose powers are these?
CAPT. They are of Norway, sir.
HAM. How purposed, sir, I pray you?
CAPT. Against some part of Poland.
HAM. Who commands them, sir?
CAPT. The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.
HAM. Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?

CAPT. Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.
HAM. Why, then the Polack never will defend it.
CAPT. Yes, it is already garrison'd.
HAM. Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw:
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.
CAPT. God be wi' you, sir. [*Exit.*
ROS. Will't please you go, my lord?
HAM. I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.
[*Exeunt all but* HAMLET.
How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scrupl
Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward, I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means

To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause.
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

[*Exit.*

SCENE V

Elsinore. A room in the castle.

Enter QUEEN, HORATIO, *and a* Gentleman.

QUEEN. I will not speak with her.

GENT. She is importunate, indeed distract:
Her mood will needs be pitied.

QUEEN. What would she have?

GENT. She speaks much of her father; says she hears
There's tricks i' the world, and hems, *and beats her* heart,
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

HOR. 'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN. Let her come in. [*Exit* Gentleman.
[*Aside.*] To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Re-enter Gentleman, *with* OPHELIA.

OPH. Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN. How now, Ophelia!

OPH. [*Sings.*]

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.

QUEEN. Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPH. Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[*Sings.*] He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Oh, oh!

QUEEN. Nay, but, Ophelia,—

OPH. Pray you, mark.

[*Sings.*] White his shroud as the mountain snow,—

Enter KING.

QUEEN. Alas, look here, my lord.

OPH. [*Sings.*]

Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

KING. How do you, pretty lady?

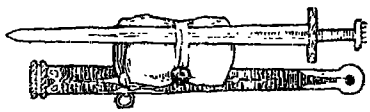
OPH. Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

KING. Conceit upon her father.

OPH. Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

Act IV. Scene VI.

First Sail. *There's a letter for you, sir; it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.* Page 127



[*Sings.*] To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

KING. How long hath she been thus?

OPH. I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit.*

KING. Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. [*Exit* HORATIO.

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions. First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove: the people muddied,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgement,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France;
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;

Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death. [*A noise within.*

QUEEN. Alack, what noise is this?

KING. Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

Enter another Gentleman.

What is the matter?

GENT. Save yourself, my lord:
The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord:
And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry 'Choose we: Laertes shall be king!'
Caps, hands and tongues applaud it to the clouds:
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!'

QUEEN. How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

KING. The doors are broke. [*Noise within.*

Enter LAERTES, *armed;* Danes *following.*

LAER. Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

DANES. No, let's come in.

LAER. I pray you, give me leave.

DANES. We will, we will.

[*They retire without the door.*

LAER. I thank you: keep the door. O thou vile king,
Give me my father!

QUEEN. Calmly, good Laertes.

KING. What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.
Speak, man.

LAER. Where is my father?

KING. Dead.

QUEEN. But not by him.

KING. Let him demand his fill.

LAER. How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged
Most throughly for my father.

KING. Who shall stay you?

LAER. My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

KING. Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge,

That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

LAER. None but his enemies.

KING. Will you know them then?

LAER. To his good friends thus wide I 'll ope my arms;
And like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.

KING. Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgement pierce
As day does to your eye.

DANES [*Within.*] Let her come in.

LAER. How now! what noise is that?

Re-enter OPHELIA.

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt,
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight,
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
O heavens! is 't possible, a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

OPH. [*Sings.*]

They bore him barefaced on the bier;
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;
And in his grave rain'd many a tear,—

Fare you well, my dove!

LAER. Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

OPH. [*Sings.*] You must sing a-down a-down,
An you call him a-down-a.
O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward,—
that stole his master's daughter.

LAER. This nothing's more than matter.

OPH. There 's rosemary, that 's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts.

LAER. A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPH. There 's fennel for you, and columbines: there 's rue for you; and here 's some for me: we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays: O, you must wear your rue with a difference. There 's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died: they say he made a good end,—

[*Sings.*] For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

LAER. Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

OPH. [*Sings.*] And will a' not come again?
And will a' not come again?
No, no, he is dead:
Go to thy death-bed:
He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan:
God ha' mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' you. [*Exit.*

LAER. Do you see this, O God?

KING. Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me:
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

LAER. Let this be so;
His means of death, his obscure funeral,
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,
That I must call 't in question.

KING. So you shall;
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI

Another room in the castle.

Enter HORATIO *and a* Servant.

HOR. What are they that would speak with me?

SERV. Sea-faring men, sir: they say they have letters for you.

HOR. Let them come in. [*Exit* Servant.
I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors.

FIRST SAIL. God bless you, sir.

HOR. Let him bless thee too.

FIRST SAIL. He shall, sir, an 't please him. There 's a letter for you, sir: it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

HOR. [*Reads.*] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the king: they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them: on the instant they got clear of our

ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. He that thou knowest thine,

HAMLET.'

Come, I will make you way for these your letters;
And do 't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII

Another room in the castle.

Enter KING *and* LAERTES.

KING. Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life.

LAER. It well appears: but tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirr'd up.

KING. O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you perhaps seem much unsinew'd,
But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself—
My virtue or my plague, be it either which—
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him;
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,

Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aim'd them.

LAER. And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

KING. Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more.
I loved your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine—

Enter a Messenger.

How now! what news?

MESS. Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
This to your majesty; this to the queen.

KING. From Hamlet! who brought them?

MESS. Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:
They were given me by Claudio; he received them
Of him that brought them.

KING. Laertes, you shall hear them.
Leave us. [*Exit* Messenger.

[*Reads.*] 'High and mighty, You shall know I am set

naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return. HAMLET.'

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

LAER. Know you the hand?

KING. 'Tis Hamlet's character. 'Naked!'
And in a postscript here, he says 'alone.'
Can you advise me?

LAER. I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
'Thus didest thou.'

KING. If it be so, Laertes—
As how should it be so? how otherwise?—
Will you be ruled by me?

LAER. Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

KING. To thine own peace. If he be now return'd,
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To an exploit now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice
And call it accident.

LAER. My lord, I will be ruled;
The rather, if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.

KING. It falls right.
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one, and that in my regard
Of the unworthiest siege.
LAER. What part is that, my lord?
KING. A very riband in the cap of youth,
Yet needful too: for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy:—
I 've seen myself, and served against, the French,
And they can well on horseback: but this gallant
Had witchcraft in 't; he grew unto his seat,
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
As had he been incorpsed and demi-natured
With the brave beast: so far he topp'd my thought
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Came short of what he did.
LAER. A Norman was 't?
KING. A Norman.
LAER. Upon my life, Lamond.
KING. The very same.
LAER. I know him well: he is the brooch indeed
And gem of all the nation.
KING. He made confession of you,
And gave you such a masterly report
For art and exercise in your defence

And for your rapier most especial,
That he cried out, 'twould be a sight indeed
If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,
He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you opposed them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.
Now, out of this—

LAER. What out of this, my lord?

KING. Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

LAER. Why ask you this?

KING. Not that I think you did not love your father;
But that I know love is begun by time,
And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still,
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,
Dies in his own too much: that we would do
We should do when we would; for this 'would' changes
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;
And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer:
Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?

LAER. To cut his throat i' the church.

KING. No place indeed should murder sanctuarize;
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together,
And wager on your heads: he, being remiss
Most generous and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that with ease
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice
Requite him for your father.

LAER. I will do't:
And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratch'd withal: I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

KING. Let's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance,
'Twere better not assay'd: therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold
If this did blast in proof. Soft! let me see:

We 'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings:
I ha 't:
When in your motion you are hot and dry—
As make your bouts more violent to that end—
And that he calls for drink, I 'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there. But stay, what noise?

Enter QUEEN.

How now, sweet queen!

QUEEN. One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow: your sister 's drown'd, Laertes.

LAER. Drown'd! O, where?

QUEEN. There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,

Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAER. Alas, then she is drown'd?

QUEEN. Drown'd, drown'd.

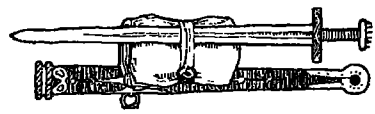
LAER. Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will; when these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it. [*Exit.*

KING. Let's follow, Gertrude:
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let's follow. [*Exeunt.*

Act IV. Scene VII.

Queen. *One woe doth tread upon another's heel,*
So fast they follow: Your sister's drown'd,
Laertes.

Laer. *Drown'd! O, where?* Page 135





Act. V.

S

FIRST CLO. Ay, marry, is 't; crowner's quest law.

SECOND CLO. Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

FIRST CLO. Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

SECOND CLO. Was he a gentleman?

FIRST CLO. A' was the first that ever bore arms.

SECOND CLO. Why, he had none.

FIRST CLO. What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged: could he dig without arms? I 'll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

SECOND CLO. Go to.

FIRST CLO. What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

SECOND CLO. The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

FIRST CLO. I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again, come.

SECOND CLO. 'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?'

FIRST CLO. Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

SECOND CLO. Marry, now I can tell.

FIRST CLO. To 't.

SECOND CLO. Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO, *afar off.*

FIRST CLO. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker': the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a stoup of liquor. [*Exit* Second Clown.

[*He digs, and sings.*]

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for-a my behove,
O, methought, there-a was nothing-a meet.

HAM. Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

HOR. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

HAM. 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

FIRST CLO. [*Sings.*]

But age with his stealing steps,
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.

[*Throws up a skull.*

HAM. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now

o'er-reaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

HOR. It might, my lord.

HAM. Or of a courtier; which could say 'Good-morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, sweet lord?' This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it; might it not?

HOR. Ay, my lord.

HAM. Why, e'en so: and now my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on't.

FIRST CLO. [*Sings.*]

A pick-axe, and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up another skull.*

HAM. There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? will his vouchers vouch him no

more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

HOR. Not a jot more, my lord.

HAM. Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

HOR. Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

HAM. They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sirrah?

FIRST CLO. Mine, sir.

[*Sings.*] O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

HAM. I think it be thine, indeed: for thou liest in't.

FIRST CLO. You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours: for my part, I do not lie in't, and yet it is mine.

HAM. Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine: 'tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

FIRST CLO. 'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away again, from me to you.

HAM. What man dost thou dig it for?

FIRST CLO. For no man, sir.

HAM. What woman, then?

FIRST CLO. For none, neither.

HAM. Who is to be buried in't?

FIRST CLO. One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAM. How absolute the knave is! we must speak by

the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

FIRST CLO. Of all the days i' the year, I came to't that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

HAM. How long is that since?

FIRST CLO. Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: it was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

HAM. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

FIRST CLO. Why, because a' was mad: a' shall recover his wits there; or, if a' do not, it's no great matter there.

HAM. Why?

FIRST CLO. 'Twill not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

HAM. How came he mad?

FIRST CLO. Very strangely, they say.

HAM. How 'strangely'?

FIRST CLO. Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

HAM. Upon what ground?

FIRST CLO. Why, here in Denmark: I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

HAM. How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

FIRST CLO. I' faith, if a' be not rotten before a' die, a' will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

HAM. Why he more than another?

FIRST CLO. Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his

trade, that a' will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your dead body. Here's a skull now: this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

HAM. Whose was it?

FIRST CLO. A mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

HAM. Nay, I know not.

FIRST CLO. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

HAM. This?

FIRST CLO. E'en that.

HAM. Let me see. [*Takes the skull.*] Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HOR. What's that, my lord?

HAM. Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

HOR. E'en so.

HAM. And smelt so? pah! [*Puts down the skull.*

HOR. E'en so, my lord.

HAM. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

HOR. 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

HAM. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam: and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!

But soft! but soft! aside: here comes the king,

Enter Priests, *etc.*, *in procession; the Corpse of* OPHELIA, LAERTES *and* Mourners *following;* KING, QUEEN, *their trains, etc.*

The queen, the courtiers: who is this they follow?
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life: 'twas of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark.

[*Retiring with* HORATIO.

LAER. What ceremony else?

HAM. That is Laertes, a very noble youth: mark.

LAER. What ceremony else?

FIRST PRIEST. Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warrantise: her death was doubtful;
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

LAER. Must there no more be done?

FIRST PRIEST. No more be done:
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

LAER. Lay her i' the earth:
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

HAM. What, the fair Ophelia!

QUEEN. Sweets to the sweet: farewell!
[*Scattering flowers.*
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.

LAER. O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:
[*Leaps into the grave.*

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

HAM. [*Advancing.*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the grave.*

LAER. The devil take thy soul! [*Grappling with him.*

HAM. Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I something in me dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear: hold off thy hand.

KING. Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN. Hamlet, Hamlet!

ALL. Gentlemen,—

HOR. Good my lord, be quiet.

[*The* Attendants *part them, and they come out of the grave.*

HAM. Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

QUEEN. O my son, what theme?

HAM. I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

KING. O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN. For love of God, forbear him.

HAM. 'Swounds, show me what thou 'lt do:
Woo 't weep? woo 't fight? woo 't fast? woo 't tear thyself?
Woo 't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
I 'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing its pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,
I 'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN. This is mere madness:
And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.

HAM. Hear you, sir;
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever: but it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew and dog will have his day. [*Exit.*

KING. I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.
[*To* LAERTES.] [*Exit* HORATIO.
Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;
We 'll put the matter to the present push.
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living monument:
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

A hall in the castle.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

HAM. So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other;
You do remember all the circumstance?
HOR. Remember it, my lord!
HAM. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
And praised be rashness for it, let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall: and that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will,—
HOR. That is most certain.
HAM. Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them; had my desire,
Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew
To mine own room again; making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,—
O royal knavery!—an exact command,

Larded with many several sorts of reasons
Importing Denmark's health and England's too,
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.

HOR. Is 't possible?

HAM. Here 's the commission: read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HOR. I beseech you.

HAM. Being thus be-netted round with villanies,—
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,—I sat me down,
Devised a new commission, wrote it fair:
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning, but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service: wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote?

HOR. Ay, good my lord.

HAM. An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary,
As love between them like the palm might flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
And many such-like 'As' es of great charge,
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.

HOR. How was this seal'd?

HAM. Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal;
Folded the writ up in the form of the other,
Subscribed it, gave 't the impression, placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.
HOR. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.
HAM. Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow:
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.
HOR. Why, what a king is this!-
HAM. Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon-
He that hath kill'd my king and stain'd my mother,
Popp'd in between the election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage—is 't not perfect conscience,
To quit him with this arm? and is 't not to be damn'd,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?
HOR. It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.
HAM. It will be short: the interim is mine;
And a man's life no more than to say 'One.'
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For, by the image of my cause, I see

The portraiture of his: I'll court his favours:
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.
HOR. Peace! who comes here?

Enter OSRIC.

OSR. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.
HAM. I humbly thank you, sir. Dost know this water-fly?
HOR. No, my good lord.
HAM. Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile: let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess: 'tis a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.
OSR. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.
HAM. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for the head.
OSR. I thank your lordship, it is very hot.
HAM. No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.
OSR. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.
HAM. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot, or my complexion—
OSR. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 'twere, —I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head: sir, this is the matter—
HAM. I beseech you, remember—

[HAMLET *moves him to put on his hat.*

OSR. Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

HAM. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment I take him to be a soul of great article; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

OSR. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAM. The concernancy, sir? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

OSR. Sir?

HOR. Is't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do't, sir, really.

HAM. What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSR. Of Laertes?

HOR. His purse is empty already; all's golden words are spent.

HAM. Of him, sir.

OSR. I know you are not ignorant—

HAM. I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

OSR. You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

HAM. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.

OSR. I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.

HAM. What's his weapon?

OSR. Rapier and dagger.

HAM. That's two of his weapons: but, well.

OSR. The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAM. What call you the carriages?

HOR. I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.

OSR. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAM. The phrase would be more germane to the matter, if we could carry a cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages; that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this 'imponed,' as you call it?

OSR. The king, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed

you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAM. How if I answer 'no'?

OSR. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAM. Sir, I will walk here in the hall: if it please his majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me; let the foils he brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSR. Shall I redeliver you e'en so?

HAM. To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will.

OSR. I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAM. Yours, yours. [*Exit* OSRIC.] He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for 's turn.

HOR. This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

HAM. He did comply with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he—and many more of the same breed that I know the drossy age dotes on—only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

Enter a Lord.

LORD. My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall: he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

HAM. I am constant to my purposes; they follow the king's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

LORD. The king and queen and all are coming down.

HAM. In happy time.

LORD. The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

HAM. She well instructs me. [*Exit* Lord.

HOR. You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAM. I do not think so: since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

HOR. Nay, good my lord,—

HAM. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving, as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HOR. If your mind dislike any thing, obey it. I will forestal their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

HAM. Not a whit; we defy augury: there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all; since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, *and* Lords, OSRIC, *and other* Attendants *with foils and gauntlets; a table and flagons of wine on it.*

KING. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

[*The* KING *puts* LAERTES' *hand into* HAMLET'S.

HAM. Give me your pardon, sir: I 've done you wrong;
But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd
With sore distraction. What I have done,
That might your nature, honour and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was 't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And when he 's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it, then? His madness: if 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience,
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

LAER. I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge: but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconcilement,
Till by some elder masters of known honour

I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungored. But till that time,
I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.

HAM. I embrace it freely,
And will this brother's wager frankly play.
Give us the foils. Come on.

LAER. Come, one for me.

HAM. I'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.

LAER. You mock me, sir.

HAM. No, by this hand.

KING. Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

HAM. Very well, my lord;
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

KING. I do not fear it; I have seen you both:
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.

LAER. This is too heavy, let me see another.

HAM. This likes me well. These foils have all a length?
[*They prepare to play.*

OSR. Ay, my good lord.

KING. Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
'Now the king drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin:
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAM. Come on, sir.

LAER. Come, my lord. [*They play.*

HAM. One.

LAER. No.

HAM. Judgement.

OSR. A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAER. Well; again.

KING. Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;
Here's to thy health.
[*Trumpets sound, and cannons shot off within.*
Give him the cup.

HAM. I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.
Come. [*They play.*] Another hit; what say you?

LAER. A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING. Our son shall win.

QUEEN. He's fat, and scant of breath.
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows:
The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

HAM. Good madam!

KING. Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN. I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

KING. [*Aside.*] It is the poison'd cup: it is too late.

HAM. I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.

QUEEN. Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAER. My lord, I 'll hit him now.
KING. I do not think 't.
LAER. [*Aside.*] And yet it is almost against my conscience.
HAM. Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally;
I pray you, pass with your best violence;
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.
LAER. Say you so? come on. [*They play.*
OSR. Nothing, either way.
LAER. Have at you now!
[LAERTES *wounds* HAMLET; *then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and* HAMLET *wounds* LAERTES.
KING. Part them; they are incensed.
HAM. Nay, come, again. [*The* QUEEN *falls.*
OSR. Look to the queen there, ho!
HOR. They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?
OSR. How is 't, Laertes?
LAER. Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric; I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.
HAM. How does the queen?
KING. She swounds to see them bleed.
QUEEN. No, no, the drink, the drink,—O my dear Hamlet,—
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd. [*Dies.*
HAM. O villany! Ho! let the door be lock'd:
Treachery! Seek it out.
LAER. It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good;
In thee there is not half an hour of life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,

Unbated and envenom'd: the foul practice
Hath turn'd itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd:
I can no more: the king, the king's to blame.

HAM. The point envenom'd too!
Then, venom, to thy work. [*Stabs the* KING.

ALL. Treason! treason!

KING. O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt.

HAM. Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?
Follow my mother. [KING *dies.*

LAER. He is justly served;
It is a poison temper'd by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee.
Nor thine on me! [*Dies.*

HAM. Heaven made thee free of it! I follow thee.
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!
You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time—as this fell sergeant, death,
Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

HOR. Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here's yet some liquor left.

HAM. As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I'll have't.
O good Horatio, what a wounded name,

Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story. [*March afar off, and shot within.*
What warlike noise is this?

OSR. Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

HAM. O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
I cannot live to hear the news from England;
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;
So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited. The rest is silence. [*Dies.*

HOR. Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince:
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!
Why does the drum come hither? [*March within.*

Enter FORTINBRAS *and the* English Ambassadors, *with drums, colours, and* Attendants.

FORT. Where is this sight?

HOR. What is it you would see?
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

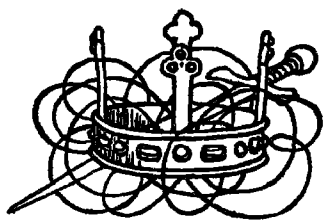
FORT. This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast struck?

FIRST AMB. The sight is dismal;
And our affairs from England come too late:
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead:
Where should we have our thanks?
HOR. Not from his mouth,
Had it the ability of life to thank you:
He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view;
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about: so shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver.
FORT. Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune:
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.
HOR. Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more:
But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's mind are wild; lest more mischance

On plots and errors happen.

FORT. Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally: and, for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies: such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[*A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.*]



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